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A Story of New York City Life.

By

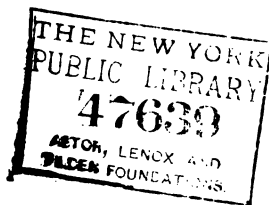
Richard Henry Savage,

Author of "My Official Wife," "The
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BOOK I.—A Stranger Within the Gates.

CHAPTER I.

A FATHER'S FOREBODINGS.

There is nothing more unwelcome than a sudden summons to break off a holiday run and return to that daily grind which leaves the mark of the nether and upper millstones graven deeply upon the care-worn faces of the bread winners of Gotham. Counselor Hiram Bashford of the New York Bar scowled darkly at the innocent-looking youth who had dashed up to the Hall with an ominous yellow envelope. The great lawyer absently signed his name, tossing a reluctant half dollar to the telegraph messenger.

"No answer, sir?" timidly demanded the lad, as he tightened his horse's girth. A decisive growl of negation was the reply of the senior partner of that eminent firm of New York counselors, whose signature, "Bashford, Blake and Bodley," on bill of exceptions or bill of costs, is justly esteemed a terror to friend and foe.

"What is it, Bashford?" hazarded the master of the Hall. "Nothing that will take you away from us, I

hope?" And then, Philip Ware indulged in certain heartfelt maledictions upon the name of Morse. Hiram Bashford, strong in his wrath, rose and pitched away his cigar, after the fashion of hurling a hand grenade. "Only the same old thing! There's Bodley and Blake, both younger men than myself—juniors, too, in the firm—the one, racing all over Europe with his fashionable wife, and the other, a fiend for fishing, lurking in the Yellowstone Park! I believe there is a secret compact between them and Withers, our head clerk, that I shall be shadowed daily in law vacation! I must go up to town! Something is wrong with Pacific Mail!" The irate lawyer then thrust the telegram in his pocket and glanced around in defiance, as if he expected the sudden appearance of an unknown champion of the three recalcitrants.

But the dreamy silence of a golden September afternoon was unbroken, save by the lazy calls of the mariners "on sloop and shallop," slowly drifting down the broad Delaware. The hills and dales around New Castle were now decked in the glories of the fading summer, and a few colored servants listlessly shuffled about the gardens of the Hall, which was the last of Philip Ware's patrimonial possessions. A few miles to the north, the cloud of smoke rising over busy Wilmington seemed to hover as an ominous black blot upon the perfect skies of the summer which had brought the long sundered college comrades together. For forty years had passed since Hiram Bashford and Philip Ware had parted under the elms of Yale, with all the promise of their youth written on their brows—and but too well the classmates knew those four figures of warning—1890.

Bashford, burdened with the toils of the forum, and bending under the weight of hard won honors, had gladly accepted the invitation, couched in almost plaintive terms, which called him to dreamy Delaware. And, even in his angry mood, he was struck with the dismay upon his host's melancholy face. The man who "had arrived" stopped in his selfish passion to say kindly:

"I am very sorry, Phil—sorry to leave you! It has been like a waft of the old days to be with you again; but—I can't help it! I must leave you to-morrow morning." "There is something that I must speak to you about before you go, Hiram," faltered Judge Ware, indecisively. "And the time is so short! There are some people coming to dine here to-night—Shearer, of the Bank, and also one or two men of the profession, whom I have asked to meet you." There was a vague sorrow thrilling in Philip Ware's plaint.

"If there is anything I can do, Phil, command me!" said the favored son of fortune, grasping his friend's hand warmly. There was a strange pallor on the host's colorless face, as he murmured a few words of gratitude.

"I thank you, Hiram," he gravely said. "I only wished to speak to you about Madeleine"—and as he turned his head away, the father's eyes were dim and clouded.

"Where are the young ladies?" demanded Bashford, trying to break an awkward silence. "They are out driving," hastily replied the host, as he rose in some confusion. "I will come up to your rooms when the guests leave to-night," continued the agitated man. "For I must have a long talk with you—and Madeleine must not know of it." With a few words of apology for his absence, Philip Ware departed on hospitable thoughts intent. For the light foot of his beautiful Maryland bride had not lingered long in the old manor house. The silence of Philip Ware's widowed years had only been broken by the merry prattle of that motherless child who had filled the lonely heart tenanted by the gracious shade of the vanished beauty.

A man upon whom the hopes of his entire class were builded, Philip Ware had passed his life in a dreamy self-absorption. A peerless master of the theory of the law, a refined and far-soaring student, success had strangely passed him by—and his intellectual face bore the sad seal of self-confessed failure. For he, with all his arts and graces, with all the wealth of the garnered

treasury of years, was not one of the lucky mortals "who touch the magic string."

"Poor Phil!" murmured Hiram Bashford, as he cut a deeply indented V into a companionable cigar, and wandered slowly away down into the dim haunts of the neglected gardens. He found a seat where the blue Delaware shone out in the tranquil afternoon, framed in fantastic vistas of the old trees dating from the days when the Blue and Buff uniforms of the Delaware regiment had thronged these same grassy lawns. The stern, strong face of the great advocate relaxed as he recalled the vanished youthful brightness of Philip Ware's delicate and refined face. "He has missed it all along!" mused Bashford. "I remember Phil's letter, when he carried away that sweet Maryland heiress from a 'press of gallant knights!' 'Love is enough!' A tender and chivalric motto, yet, Death broke that golden chain, and the love which has never shone on my life has been the crowning sorrow of his!" As the man whose voice brought ever a silence to the crowded court room mused alone, there was a tender light in the steady gray eyes. A wintry play of the northern lights of the old romance, now fled forever. Burly, rugged, of giant frame, with an imposing presence, Hiram Bashford was a tall oak of the human forest. His fifty-eight years had not robbed his resonant voice of its manly ring, and his strongly moulded features bespoke power, resolution and mental poise.

Keen, direct, strong and incisive, he drew his legal wisdom from a deep well of clear, cold reason. Bold, and yet cautious, there was "good fighting all along the line" when Hiram Bashford stood up to battle for his millionaire clients, the great American "plutocrats." Secretly fearing and openly respecting him, these mighty sons of Mammon held their breath when they entered the sanctum where Bashford's resolute fingers energetically carved his unerring lines deeply into the construction of brief or pleading. He wore his laurel crown as "a sceptered hermit"—for the law

had been to him a jealous mistress, and the only handmaiden of his strangely lonely life. It was enough for him to have the respect of friend and foe. Upon his shield rested no stain, for he cherished always the idea that the profession of the law had not descended into a mere "business." Just and courteous to all, he stalked the intellectual forests alone. Though all knew him in New York, his few visits to the clubs and his rarer appearances at the great dinner functions were red letter days to his admirers. Rich and powerful, eschewing faction and politics, he went soberly along the upward path toward the summit where his eagle eyes had rested in youth. It had never occurred to Hiram Bashford to ask what the world thought of him. His single recorded outburst of merriment occurred when the slyest legal fox in Manhattan ruefully said: "I will never make a mistake on Hiram again! I slighted my last case against him, and he just went through my defenses, like a circus rider through a paper hoop." It was a compliment which touched the grim champion's heart.

On this summer afternoon the visitor forgot his future demurrers and injunctions to enter into the consideration of his agitated host's troubles. In the three weeks of a stolen furlough, the lawyer had been turning backward with Time in its flight, and had given but little personal attention to Madeleine Ware, the subject of the coming conference.

And as little had he busied himself with that particularly vivacious young Pennsylvania heiress, Miss Florence Atwater, whose return from a two years' wandering brought her to the side of the beautiful comrade of their four happy years at Ogontz. The two young nymphs were all in all to each other. "I suppose it is some love affair!" murmured Bashford, as he sought in vain for any alarming symptoms of a crash among the household gods. "Ware has a storied old home nest here. He seems well-to-do. He lives almost in old colonial style." The visitor felt his own unfitness to grapple with family matters. It had not

been faint heartedness or egoism which had caused him to navigate his bark of life alone. Chary of speech, Bashford had curiously watched from a distance the social outcome of those who had studied "the bright lexicon of youth" in his company. No man dared to draw out the secrets of a heart always sealed to the world, and yet none dared to say that the great counselor adhered to Bismarck's brutal dictum: "It is an immense advantage to the career of any man if he can embark on the voyage of life without a female crew."

For the sagacious Bashford well knew that the "man of blood and iron" was himself a conspicuous example of the worthlessness of his own words! Doomed to sit alone, in a neglected, if splendid, old age, and mourn the vanished smile of his tender-hearted wife, gone before. "I fancy," mused Bashford, "that some detrimental wishes to carry away the queen of these nodding roses. Perhaps some adroit youths have broken in over the garden wall, attracted by the buttressed millions of that bright imp, Miss Florence! Those society guerillas often hunt in couples. Strange," continued the bachelor lawyer, in a reminiscent mood, and waving his cigar at an imaginary "Court," "how easy it is for good and eligible women to be attracted by perfectly worthless men! Your fine women are like shy trout—you can catch them best with a feather!" He sighed, for he had all the reverence of a lonely man for that charming sex of which he knew so very little. Bashford's women acquaintance had been limited to bands of hungry heirs at law, fighting each other with true family ferocity; to certain fretful and pampered widows, anxious to hurl their substance away upon the "coming man," usually a youthful replica of the "loved and lost," with occasional "lurid heroines" who had found "marriage a failure," and were uneasily shifting the "burden of their loneliness" upon some passionate hidden admirer lurking in the wilds of South Dakota. "These people don't count," frowned the lawyer. "Their trouble is of a kind which finally

cures itself! But, why good, gifted and lovable women will throw themselves, open-armed, at fantastic renegades or haggard-eyed frauds, is a puzzle to me! They find the cud of experience a bitter one to chew, at the outcome." While the counselor paced aimlessly about the witchingly lovely grounds, it suddenly occurred to him that Madeleine Ware might have been sacrificed to the studious Nirvana of her father's widowed retirement. "Yes! That's it!" the bachelor lawyer decided, as he paused and gazed at the rambling old Revolutionary mansion, now steeped in the golden sunshine. "Poor Phil! He has nursed his grief for the angel on the threshold. I presume the dear old boy thinks that his daughter is a bit of delicate machinery like a Dent's chronometer, only a beautiful mechanism, to be put in a safe place, and, with proper treatment, to then run on forever! But," and the lonely man sighed, "the human heart has its strange aberrations! Love comes sooner or later to all lives! And, as for Madeleine, better too soon, than too late. A world of trouble now, in her fresh and blooming youth, may save a wilderness of later sobs of sadness! I wonder if a little of the brightness that encircles this Princess of Pennsylvania would not lift the gray clouds around this girl who has silently slipped up from bud and blossom into a rare woman in this Adamless Paradise! I must speak to Ware. Perhaps a flank movement may disconcert the enemy! I will try."

Though no squire of dames, Hiram Bashford had noted the remarkable superiority in parlor arts of that feather-headed class of men which hurls its giant intellect upon a tangled cotillion figure, or dominates the "reception" with the stern solemnity of the autocrat.

"Such as it is, these fellows know their business!" growled Bashford, with self-accusing memories of many accidents in his infrequent excursions into the glittering jungles of society. Unwilling voyages on ladies' trails, of strange intricacy and long drawn out

splendor came back to him. Sundry Waterloos where he had offered the wrong arm, or inadvertently sent a postal card to a haughty dame hung upon his darkened soul. "Yes! These gilded youths who brace up their slim necks with three-story collars are great—in small things," he growled, as he wandered back to the house. "They point a moral and adorn a tale!" he chuckled, with professional memories of various crest-fallen 'co-respondents' whose faces, grown familiar in court, were hideously distorted in the great Sunday blanket sheets, to the huge edification of the "injured."

As the lawyer sought his dressing room, he vaguely wondered if any pecuniary troubles darkened the house which he had found so pleasant. "If it was only money," he reflected, "I could soon fix that! And yet Philip Ware is as proud as a Circassian prince! How could I ever find a way to help him! I must talk with Miss Madeleine myself." Bashford felt a pang at the idea of delving into the gentle girl's soul with the probe of an intellect too prone to cross-examination. "I can find a secret way to be kind to her, perhaps," he mused, as he mounted the stair. "If it's the wrong man, I may induce Miss Atwater to delude this pretty hermit out into the wider maelstrom of the Pennsylvania 'swim!' I know her own circle of senatorial and millionaire trustees. I suppose her astute father selected these crafty Apaches of the golden tribe to watch each other. Now, some other Prince Charming may enter the field, if Miss Madeleine makes a return visit! *'Similia similibus curantur!'*" And Bashford then and there determined to swoop alongside, a great battle ship, and speak the pretty little cup defender from the land of Penn. "Yes, I must gain the confidence of Miss Florence Atwater," he gaily decided, "if I am to have a glimpse of this Delaware maiden's heart."

The New York lawyer had interpreted Philip Ware's coming interview to be keyed upon the soft notes of love alone. The only business of woman's life seemed to be a matter of marriages "in esse, or posse," to the

bachelor. He had failed to note the new forks in the road of Life on which the daughters of Eve have long wandered, "with reluctant feet." To him the broadening career of the modern woman was only an impalpable dream of sundry vigorous agitators. He was aware that heroic women, in attire of Redfern's chaste severity or Worth's florid artistic intricacy, did lift up their voices in the serene halls of Sorosis, or pipe forth olden truths from new pulpits. He had dimly recognized the fact that women now aspired to lose cases or patients, with the calm unconcern of the masculine lawyer or physician. But, it had never occurred to him that women would ever be rightly anything but women! His own mother was but a gently hovering memory now—whose vanished face still thrilled the fibres of his world-worn heart. The dead woman whom he fain would one time have made his own, too, was hidden behind the unlifted veil of a great heart's inmost chamber. The fighting of the stern battle of life in the open seemed to him to be a struggle unfitted to that gentle sex which he so deeply revered—for his lonely life had hidden from his critical gaze those little blemishes in woman nature which the crosses and trials of the marriage intimacy may sometimes discover. Counselor Bashford regarded certain self-constituted champions of the "downtrodden sex" as most unnecessary evils. He avoided the dim haunts where they glowered as lionesses in the pathway, with the extremest care. He entertained a chastened aversion for these forerunners of new morals—strange diversions and uncanny feminine costume. In fact, he shunned their chosen coigns of vantage as carefully as the superstitious Celt avoids the Banshee's chosen eyrie, or the War Lord of the modern world the favorite walks of the White Lady of the Hohenzollerns. Those "bright, aspiring woman souls" who had made inroads upon the three learned professions were, he thought, only fitted to be set up as "awful examples" in the Eden Musée or Huber's "unrivalled collection."

Like others of his craven sex, Counselor Bashford

had gently toyed with the awful responsibilities of the situation, when a delegation of these basilisk-eyed sisters truculently placed a "petition of right" before him for his signature. Wise in his deceit, Bashford had blandly requested them to "leave the papers till he could examine the subject further." In this unheroic manner he

Dallied with his golden chain,
And, smiling, put the question by!

When the fair Comanches had sallied forth on their unending "forlorn hope" warpath, Counselor Bashford sternly smote Managing Clerk Withers with the bitterest words of cold reproof. "You should have known better, Withers," he gloomily said. "You are paid to know better. I had a very narrow escape." And, the petition remained unsigned forever. So the mind of the lawyer was running on "marriage" and "giving in marriage" only, when two beautiful, bright-eyed banditti waylaid him in the great upper hallway.

It was breathless Madeleine Ware who said, in an unmistakable burst of confidence: "Judge Bashford, I must have a few words with you before you go! My father has just told me! I am so sorry!"

The lawyer's rugged face gleamed like an uplifted rock glittering in unwonted sunshine, as he greeted the two fair excursionists.

"It must be a morning walk, then, Miss Madeleine, in your enchanted gardens!" he said; "for I also wish to confer with Miss Atwater upon a matter of moment. This evening, I must give up to your father entirely." A more alert trio of conspirators never gathered behind Venetian tapestries than the three who gaily arranged a tryst "when the dew drops pearly each bud and leaf." "I want to speak to you about my future," earnestly said the daughter of the house, with a clouded brow, and yet, Bashford smiled as he bowed deeply. "I think I can read it," he gently murmured, as he sought his room, after gaining Miss Atwater's

easily granted promise. "'Pon my word, I am becoming quite a society man!" gleefully ruminated the lawyer, as he descended the stair—a modern Webster, resplendent in his dinner panoply.

And he absently hummed an old love song, fragrant yet with the memories of long faded roses which had drifted over the tomb of an unforgotten romance—the hidden story of that life which all men thought so hard and loveless. Ah! Star-eyed Memory! Truest of all the friendly fairies who minister at the unprofaned altar of Love!

The grinding of wheels on the graveled driveway soon announced the coming of Philip Ware's guests, and while the master of the Hall greeted the newcomers, Bashford paced down the great hall dividing the historic old mansion into equal parts. Quaint trophies of Colonial days hung there in sober pride, and the huge drawing rooms and library were overflowing with that high tide of books which had swept Philip Ware far away out of the eddies of these later practical days. The vast dining room was already lit with the clear gleam of wax, and bravely the old mahogany gleamed under the weight of shimmering plate and glittering crystal. There was the romance of the old lurking in every quaintly delightful corner. The old colored servitors, who seemed fitted to the shades of this ancient Hall, were flitting noiselessly around, as the lawyer sought the presence of the two fair young women. In the perfunctory civilities of introduction, Hiram Bashford but casually noted the strained gravity of the local legal brethren, who stood before the "great gun" in respectful awe. It was only after the party was at table that Bashford, having deferentially escorted Miss Madeleine to her place of honor, cast his keen eyes around the busy circle. To Philip Ware hospitality was but a mantle of Arabian grace, and, seated at his own board, the father's delighted eye rested in a secret pride upon the noble face of his only child. Sixty years had lightly passed over the one-time "pride of Yale." His pale face, delicately chiseled,

bespoke the world-avoiding man of bookish refinement. Delicate, gentle, dreamy, slender of mould, and with a restless, glittering blue eye, Philip Ware's mobile mouth and womanish chin told all the story of his yielding nature. It was only too true that ruder human clay had shattered his porcelain—that rougher men had easily elbowed him aside in the struggle for concrete wealth. The barren honors of local ermine had apparently justified his semi-retirement, and the drift of years was closing softly over him. His solitary life was a confession of defeat. Bashford noted the hawk-eyed successful practitioners gathered around the gentle scholar, and murmured once more, "Poor Philip!" Yet, the simple dignity of the silver-haired Delaware gentleman, his exquisite grace, lifted him far up above the others, and he was fitly framed in these storied surroundings of the loyal old slave state.

Counselor Bashford started suddenly as he caught the dull eyes of the local banker fixed hungrily upon Madeleine Ware. "That fellow wants to chase that beautiful girl down for himself," muttered Bashford; "and he has some hold on Ware!" Such was the lightning judgment of the man who was trained to read masculine mendacity and feminine flimsiness with an unerring keenness of judgment.

Robert Shearer, a gross, solid, lethargic man of forty, had the vulpine sleekness of the man of hard cash. His sensual, heavy face, round gray eyes and cautious leering manner unpleasantly jarred upon the lawyer. His mouth, a mere horizontal slit, was pressed tightly in steel trap fashion, but to Bashford there was a quick revelation in his appealing, hesitating glances at the fair young daughter of the house, in marked contrast with the careless assumption of his confident manner in addressing his host. "A vulgar study in fats and oils!" mused Bashford—"and, withal, a fellow to be watched!" A general drabness and sleek grayness of overgrown ashy flesh tissue indicated that the great local financier had already reached

a position of pudgy self-satisfaction in life. "The sort of a fellow who thinks that he can now afford a dashing wife," indignantly reflected the counselor. It was with a glow of some internal satisfaction that Bashford saw Miss Madeleine enact "My Lady Disdain," as a pendant to the picture of spirited hostility presented by that frankly independent child of millions, Miss Florence Atwater. "He will, at any rate, never be bidden to Castle Atwater!" chuckled Bashford, as the choicest products of Maryland and Delaware moved over the table in a gastronomic review to delight the soul of Brillant Savarin.

With artful craft the New Yorker led his legal friends along a pleasant middle ground of chat, which judiciously excluded the country Rothschild. Mr. Robert Shearer, the phenomenal whale tumbling in the lazy waters of his golden pool, therefore divided his attention between the tempting dainties and the two provoking beauties. Bashford had instinctively retained himself in the coming cause of Shearer vs. Ware, and was in his heart, pledged already to the fair defendant. In affected nonchalance the visitor gathered a "bill of particulars" of the loveliness of the Ogontz classmates. "All that's best of dark and bright," murmured Hiram, forgetting his Kent and Story, and catching up an old filament of the moody Byron. The lines fitted well. Madeline Ware, throned at the head of the old mahogany, clad in the artful simplicity of fleecy white robes, pleasantly returned his friendly glances from tender brown eyes gleaming under broad Greek brows. Something above the usual stature of Eve's daughters, her noble head was grandly poised upon a figure which recalled that armless goddess whom all men adore. A coronet of fair hair whereon the sunset glow lingered framed a face of rare womanly strength and sweetness. Hiram Bashford tenderly watched the rise and fall of the necklet of old Greek gems upon her snowy breast, and the unconscious sigh of his tribute was the final seal of his secretly volunteered devotion.

The fringing laces and silken robes of Miss Florence Atwater were of the color of the tasseled golden corn. From out this burnished halo her dark beauty gleamed in a ripe intensity which startled the admiring eye. There was dewy crimson on her laughing lips, there was a world of dancing light in her splendid dark eyes, and she had diamond stars sparkling in the graceful tresses which curled over her laughing gypsy face. A rounded, petite, sparkling fairy of the night was this spoiled child of fortune. The mingled reserve and audacity of her manner proved that she had already learned the secret of her golden sceptre. "There is a young princess who will not be easily denied," ruminated the anxious lawyer. "And I shall try to conclude an alliance, defensive and offensive, forthwith, with this charming young autocrat of steel and coal." For, before the long ceremonial dinner was over, dreaming Hiram Bashford had constructed invisible breastworks of love and tenderness around the noble girl whose steadfast eyes turned ever fondly toward the gallant faded host, who looked as if he had only now come down from one of the frames in the dusky drawing room.

With some bit of retained social strategy, the Master of the Hall contrived to save a couple of hours for his visitor before midnight. When the beauties of Ogontz escaped at last from the drawn out adieu of Mr. Robert Shearer, they paused, a lovely pair of lingering nymphs, to flash secret search light signals of cheer to their self-devoted ally. "To-morrow, in the garden, at eight!" was the watchword, as Bashford, in solemn stateliness, raised their blue-veined hands in succession to his lips. Turning to his host, the lawyer noted the burly form of Shearer lingering yet, in farewell. His head was close to Philip Ware's anxious face, and the only disjointed fragment of their conversation which reached the lawyer was: "See me, at once, about the Kaolin Company. Very important. Don't fail!"

"Ah!" mused Hiram Bashford, as he followed his

old friend to that chosen coign of vantage, the old library. "The Kaolin Company! I see! I see! I suppose Brother Shearer has let Phil 'into a good thing!' I wonder if it is a bid for Miss Madeleine." And he thoughtfully cut his cigar and dalked idly over a glass of peach brandy, while Philip Ware sought counsel of his silken-gray moustache, uneasily twisted under his trembling fingers. They were alone in the stillness of the night. From above, floated down an occasional ripple of girlish laughter, and Bashford, playing a waiting game, noted his friend's nervous start when Madeleine's voice occasionally reached him. The New York lawyer was reclining in a huge cordovan leather arm chair and apparently intently studying the construction of smoke rings, when Philip Ware ceased his contemplation of a pair of busts of Washington and Lafayette.

"It was about Madeleine that I wished to speak with you," timidly began the host, as if he feared to break the thin ice of a father's delicate reserve. With a well-studied carelessness, Bashford threw all his friendly yearning into the one word, "Well?" But his tenderly eager eyes betrayed him. He had silently accumulated in the three weeks of his visit a fund of unspoken friendship for this Greek-browed daughter of Delaware. And, since his observation of Robert Shearer's crafty, vulgarly covetous glances, a red fire of wrath was already smouldering in his veins. For the local limbs of the law were mere social pawns to the distinguished visitor, but he had "sized up" the lumbering wooer with the eye of a Hawkshaw.

"I presume that you will be surprised," slowly continued Judge Ware, as if forcing himself unwillingly to speak, "but, Madeleine wants to become a lawyer!"

Hiram Bashford bounded from the cosy recesses of his great arm chair, and his dropped cigar instantly became the impelling cause of a small conflagration in the tufted carpet. "Wants to become a what? Good God, Phil! What do you say?" broke out Bashford, as he pushed his strong, firm fingers through his mane

of iron-gray hair. "What in heaven's name ever put that nonsense into her head?" And the astounded counselor then picked up his cigar as if it were a torpedo, doubly loaded.

"I thought that you would be astonished," meekly said Ware, with an air of humble apology. "I was!" roared Hiram Bashford, as he glared around in the throes of a great surprise. "Your daughter is the very last woman in the world that I thought would be given to that sort of—of—damned humbug!" energetically finished Bashford, whose extensive vocabulary had for once failed him. "I can surprise you still more," placidly continued the host. "Madeleine already is better acquainted with both the theory and details of the law than many of our best practitioners—that is, the men down here!" finished Ware, with a saving clause.

"How did she ever gain this peculiar knowledge?" most earnestly demanded Bashford, as he sternly searched the very inmost recesses of his old friend's eyes. The New York magnate was grave, even to solemnity. "You must know," slowly faltered Ware, "that my practice fell off greatly after I left the bench. I have been merely acting as counsel for years, and, you see, my law library is here." He waved his delicate hand in the direction of the dingy sheepskin volumes serried on the shelves. "When Madeleine left Ogontz she came back to me to brighten my lonely life." There were tears in the old lawyer's eyes. "That dear child, Hiram," he faltered, "by some hidden strategy, learned shorthand and typewriting as if by magic, and quietly installed herself as my secretary. She has always ranged through the library. It is my choicest possession. You see the house is a mere book mart. Well, after these two years, since Florence went to Europe, I think that she knows a great deal more of practice than I do—and, perhaps as much law!" The father paused as if seeking to read the inscrutable face of his anxious listener. But stern Hiram Bashford's rugged heart was melted. He had caught at once the secret of the splendid woman's self-devotion. "A

modern Portia!" he mused. "God bless her! But not as yet for the love of any Bassanio!" It seemed to open a vista of undreamed of depths of love to the lonely man, this silent mingling of the fresh young life with the enfeebled vital mental current of the faded scholar. It spoke of a noble womanly self-devotion. Bashford's voice was strangely gentle as he said: "Go on, Philip! Tell me all!" Philip Ware arose and paced the floor in a vague unrest. He finally found a voice for his warring thoughts as a merry "Good-night" was wafted from above in the ringing bird-like notes of that happy young princess, Miss Florence Atwater. "Madeleine wishes me now to consent to her classifying and perfecting her self-gained knowledge with a year of study, and, then, to allow her to use her talents—in—in our own profession!"

Bashford was seated with his massive head resting heavily on his hands. He gazed up frankly into the anxious father's eyes. "And she does it, why?" There was an imperious question in the sharp words. The accents of a man who demanded "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." "To get away from Shearer, who insists on marrying her!" shamefacedly said the agitated parent.

"You surely would not let her marry that stolid-looking brute?" cried Bashford, as he rose, towering above his host. "Has he spoken to her yet?" Ware shook his head. "No. But his wishes are only too evident. He is the one good match here," murmured Ware. "He bears a good public character, and is withal, a man of means!"

"Damn his public character and his means!" stoutly cried Bashford. "Can't you see that this man is unutterably beneath her?" The agitated father turned away his face as he replied in a low voice: "She certainly has the strongest aversion to him, personally. But I am perplexed. I wish I could see any other way out!" There were lightning thoughts now chasing each other through the brain of the interested listener. "I think that I can see the way out," he grimly muttered. "See here, Ware!" vigorously cried Bashford,

"I must leave you to-morrow. I have taken a great fancy to your beautiful child. She looks strangely like—like—my dead—sister!" he said, speaking as if in a dream. "But I must go! I will come down here soon again. I will then talk to her myself." There was a glow of sunlight, the sunlight of a new hope, on Philip Ware's sad face as he grasped his friend's hand. "I knew that you would help me," he gratefully murmured. "See here, Philip," sternly interrogated Bashford, "you are under no money obligations to this fellow Shearer?" "No! No!" guardedly answered the host, and then that little matter of the "Kaolin Company" seemed to return to Bashford's troubled mind. "I can soon fix all that," he fiercely decided. "Yes! I will get into this little game and take a lone hand—against Mr. Robert Shearer!" But he firmly controlled his rising indignation as he gravely said: "Philip, you have sacrificed your own splendid talents in this dreamy little forgotten corner state. Your noble child would shine out grandly in broader social circles than this Sleepy Hollow state can ever open to her. She must not either marry this scrub or venture on a life of lonely pioneer effort in our profession. The way up is hard, and—the way in, is dark! Madeleine must have a change, fresh scenes, fresh hearts and new faces around her. She is young. The world is open to her! Don't you see that Robert Shearer, this overgrown toad in a local puddle, is not the only man in the wide world! Let me aid you. I have a plan calculated to turn her away from the sterile paths of the law!" Bashford's face was glowing with a new ardor. "You do not approve, then, of these higher modern careers for women?" timidly hazarded Ware, as he resigned himself to Bashford's masterly influence. "No!" thundered Hiram. "Go and look at Sonia Kovalefsky's lonely grave! The woman who finds out that she has a brain before she feels a heart throb of natural love is doomed to the final bitterness of despair. To be famous first, to be loved later—the double event which had led so many gifted women to ruin! Let me save *Madeleine*."

CHAPTER II.

MADELEINE'S AWAKENING.

Hiram Bashford left his friend with a silent hand grasp and yet growled audibly as he mounted the grand old oaken stairs. He turned to see the unhappy Philip Ware pacing the long hall in an earnest apostrophe to the shadow faces looking down on him. The great house was all still—from the deep caverned cellars to the moss-grown dormers where the swallows rested—as Bashford hurled aside his outer casements and then, fiercely wound up his watch. "I'll wind you up, my son of Plutus," he rasped out. "Poor Madeleine! The last of her line! No one to guard or advise! If Ware should be called away, who would care whether she stumbled on to the reefs of ruin and error! Strange!" he mused. "The dry rot of our old families proves that something is wrong in our flimsy social system! Ah!" he resolutely ejaculated, as he heard the last chirp of that pretty night warbler, Miss Florence. "I have it! I'll make this little millionairess carry Madeleine away to Castle Atwater! And there, she will have no end of a good time! Yes! That is the best scheme!" And so, with a mighty puff, Bashford blew out his bedroom candles, as if he were scattering the stolid Shearer in dust and ashes over the face of the earth. "He shall never have her!" was the last growl of the legal bear, as he rolled himself up to dream of the discomfiture of the cashier. "I'll watch over that Kaolin business, too!" he muttered, as he drifted out upon the tossing sea of uneasy dreams.

Below him, while the stout lawyer tossed and sighed, Philip Ware was still there keeping a silent vigil before the fading picture which shone out to his loving eyes, limned in the unfading colors of a life-long love.

"Poor Maddy!" sighed the lonely man, as he strained his eyes until he fancied that a newer tenderness

beamed down upon him from the sweet face of the mother whom the girl had never known. "Alone in the world! And—after me! What? For—there's the Kaolin Company! Those notes! I can not tell Hiram now! If I had not gone out over my depth! Perhaps, at the worst, Florence may help her, and Hiram—Hiram, too, will be a friend!" Seated at the table, in the lonely library, the father's ~~face~~ ^{face} dropped upon his wasted hands. "My God! I dare not tell him all! He will come again. Perhaps he may find out himself and then offer to help me!" The warning cock had crowed long before Philip Ware sought his own room. The last candle had burned out when he awoke with a start and groped his way up the stair. Behind him he heard in the silent night the rustle of panther feet, the spectres of Ruin and Despair. It was known but to the prospective wooer Shearer, and to his own racked bosom, that the Kaolin Company, in which he had madly ventured his patrimony, was "on its last legs!" Philip Ware paused stealthily at Madeleine's door. He knew that sacred room, hung with its maiden drapings of spotless white. "Maddy, darling! I have been false to my trust! My own poor darling!" he whispered, as he breathed a prayer which his lips could not frame in words, that God would shield that one dear, defenseless head. And so, with all his sad misgivings weighing down a loving heart, the Master of the old Hall sought the shelter of the great chambers which had cradled his ancestors for two hundred years.

"I must see Shearer at once. Yes! As soon as Bashford leaves; but what can I do? If he presses me for Madeleine's hand—if the notes cannot be renewed—then—then, my last hope is in Hiram!" In the merciful sleep of exhaustion the last of the Masters of the old Hall slept long after the burly New Yorker was up and pacing the fragrant garden walks, now eager to keep his double tryst.

Over his morning coffee, and while his man, at special instance, added a few decorative touches to a

hasty toilet, Hiram Bashford had finished laying all the sunken mental torpedoes designed to blow Mr. Robert Shearer's matrimonial plans into minute "smithereens." The great advocate was a man accustomed to have his way. He had early grasped the truth that the world recognizes a masterful man. "King, prince and potentate, whom he smote, he overthrew," and, in confidence born of unvarying success, Bashford felt in his heart that Mr. Robert Shearer was now mentally disposed of. "He shall not have her! That's all!" boldly decided the stern lawyer. "As for her Quixotic yearning towards Blackstone, why that's another matter. I must be very gentle there!"

On his way to the rencontre of the two lovely Auro-ras, Hiram revolved the pros and cons of this strange ambition. A bit of reminiscence of a Biblical nature soon convinced him that if he was not "his brother's keeper," he was certainly not the "autocrat of his sister's future!" Reflecting that the Greek-browed girl had perhaps a will of her own, he pondered the best means of gently turning her from the thorny path of the law. "She will not storm or haggle. She will simply go ahead, as she has done for two long years of drudgery. I must recognize her labors of love! It is noble! Where do these women get their prescience of coming disaster? They are always the best judges of the shakiness of things!" Hiram had already decided that "things were very shaky" at the Hall, financially, Ware's feeble denial, notwithstanding. "It's this Kaolin nonsense, I suppose," he mused, as he sought for the nymphs who had pledged their tryst. "I can easily stand in there, by and by. I'll force the truth out of Philip when I come down again. But, I must now gain this girl's confidence and sympathize with her longings." It suddenly occurred to Bashford that in the last twenty years women had forced their way, against a heavy pressure, into many of the most famous universities; that the professional woman class had quintupled in Europe; that it had increased fifty-fold in nervous America, and that Tennyson's "Prin-

cess" was now more than a mere idle allegory, a poet's prophecy. He found himself then asking, "Why not?" when he reflected upon the splendid scholastic laurels of this newer generation of women students. "They will finally get their legal and property rights! Should have had them long ago! The right to the ownership of their own bodies, and the stewardship of their own souls! They will win the ballot yet! Why should not this same noble girl be a successful pioneer 'star' of the forum or the council room?" As he suddenly observed Miss Florence Atwater, one of Diana's loveliest attendants, darting down upon him, from mere force of habit he remarked: "It's all damned nonsense! The girl must be made to marry well, and have a good home! That's the true feminine *métier*."

For his old views as to the use of a husband to a bright woman, in the long battle of life, returned. He, an untried bachelor, fancied vaguely that any kind of a husband was better than none at all. He assigned the husband to the duties of the heavy artillery in the great conflicts of the battle field. Not a vital necessity, but a supporting element—useful to make a good deal of noise, to terrify the opposing elements, and to generally support, at all vital turning points of the conflict.

Lifting his hat with a courtly grace, Bashford recognized the dash and impulsive manner of the ardent Pennsylvanian heiress, as she pounced down upon him, for, at the farther end of a leafy avenue, Madeleine Ware, serene and tender, was coming on in stately guise, as if the spirit of the lovely morning guided her measured advance. She lingered there among the flowers she loved so well. "It's a good idea! I will finish up with the little Pennsylvanian first," decided the lawyer.

Hiram Bashford at once won young Miss Millions' heart in the graceful address with which he welcomed her. In his artful way, he quickly assumed the existence of a delightful secret understanding between them. It thrilled the pretty tyrant to be in the place of "associate counsel" with a man of national reputation.

"I must speak with Miss Madeleine soon, on an affair of some moment, my dear young lady!" said Hiram. "I shall return here, in a few days, to confer with my dear old classmate, and as I hear you are soon going back to your own home, I frankly tell you that I wish you to carry your friend away for a good long visit! It will be a useful diversion now!"

Miss Florence Atwater opened her pretty lips to categorically demand "why?"—as she paralyzed the lawyer with a searching glance of her splendid eyes. Miss Madeleine had only smiled and nodded, as she disappeared again among her sister roses. Bashford was soon as wax in the sweet little woman's hands. His armor melted away under her impassioned glance of eagerness.

"Because I do not wish her to marry this clown, Shearer," frankly admitted the lawyer, taking his cold plunge into the waters of truth, "I hope that you will take her to your enchanted castle, of which I have heard so much,"—Miss Atwater bowed in a proud humility—"and—find her a good husband to be."

"You have talked with Judge Ware! You will try to dissuade her from the legal career she wishes to take up!" flashed out Miss Florence, making a vicious feint at a stray weed, with her Paris sun shade.

Bashford drew a long breath, at this thrust of the sharp-eyed girl's rapier. "Not at all, my dear young lady!" he said, in a meek humility, which soon disarmed her. "I regard her as an extremely gifted woman! I sympathize with all her ambitions, and,—I would like not only to aid her, but also to help her father, who is my dearest college friend! So few are left now," sighed the lawyer, glancing at the semi-hostile face of the little patrician. "I will be very frank! I fear that Judge Ware is greatly embarrassed about his dear child's future! I assure you that I would help—not hinder! I have no one to work for—no one to share my lonely years. Who would be dear to me, if not this sweet child of my lifelong friend?"

Miss Florence Atwater impulsively grasped Bash

ford's great hand in her two rosy palms. She minded not the bird of paradise parasol which fluttered down before her dainty feet. "I did not think that I should like you. You are so stern, so serious," she candidly said, with a smile which was a temptation, and brought back a waft of vanished youth to the anxious man, who had "succeeded" in his simple earnest words, "but, I do like you! And I will take Maddy away with me! And, I'll help you always, on two conditions." Bashford smiled in a frank surrender to the pretty autocrat. "Name them, Miss Florence," he said softly, as she still held his hand. "You are to come yourself, sir, and see us at Castle Atwater, as you call it." The lawyer bowed. "I promise on my sacred word and honor," he vowed with mock school-boy devotion. "And you are to help her study law. I think it's just grand, and noble. That's what I think." Miss Florence cast a defiant glance around which swept away all hostile comment from whatever source. "Well, we will see about it!" good humoredly replied the advocate. "No! No!" persisted his beautiful little tyrant. "You are to help me. I am to help you. That's all. Promise! Promise!" And the strong man, at the bidding of the sweet witch, bowed his head and kissed the warm little hand of his conqueror. "I promise. There! Will that make us friends?" Hiram Bashford stood lost in a dream as the girl said: "You are just a darling, dear lawyer, you are! It will be glorious for Madeleine. I'll make Judge Ware promise me before you go to-day to give me Maddy for a month." And she then fled away with her budget of good news, crying, "I will drive you down to the station and we can then talk it all over."

Counselor Bashford seated himself in an arbor with a feeling of sinking at the heart. His secret plan of campaign had been ruthlessly smashed by the loving vehemence of the child of fortune. "By heavens! She has some of her father's dash and spirit," laughed the defeated man. He laid hands on the leading-strings of everything around him. And his brain was throng-

ing with new thoughts, strange to his olden code, as regarded womanhood, when Madeleine Ware approached with a happy light shining in the beautiful brown eyes. "Am I changed? Are the ways of women different?" the lawyer mused. "Autre temps, autre mœurs," he murmured, as he rose and greeted the grateful woman. "You have made me so happy," frankly said the modern Portia, as she seated herself by the side of her visitor. "Florence has told me of your kind promise to aid me," she softly said, with downcast eyes. "I trust not all of my unconditional surrender," was Bashford's despairing hope, but his heart leaped up as the delighted girl continued, "About your interest in my proposed path in life."

A sense of the sacredness of the confidence of that womanly young heart now glowing with a noble ardor, touched the great lawyer to the quick. For he saw in her sunrise face the glowing light of a noble ambition—of a desire to use all the ten talents, if God had so endowed her, to the utmost of her untried powers. Here was no flippant self assertion. There was no vulgar curiosity leading this daughter of an old line out into the active struggle of life. Her steadfast, reverent, self-inspired trust in the future impressed him strangely, in the hush of the beautiful morn. They were all alone, for with the infinite resources of her many arts, Miss Florence Atwater had darted away, a bright Uhlan, to pounce down upon gentle Philip Ware, who was already her bond slave, and nail him to the pillory of honor with a promise to give Madeleine over to the gilded glories of Castle Atwater for a long month. "Let me ask you, my child," gravely said Bashford, "are there many of your sex so minded now, as to the law? Is this only an idea born of your father's companionship?"

"Why, no!" frankly said Madeleine. "Womanhood is everywhere advancing its lines and banners in many other directions than mere social sway. Vassar, Smith, Barnard and Wellesley—all our woman's colleges—are crowded with earnest students. In England women

are to-day taking hard-won degrees by the score. Germany is falling into line, and even in France the intellectual woman is no longer a mere isolated prodigy. It is not clamor, Judge Bashford. It is a petition of natural right now. The right not to live on in dolls' houses as dependent upon the mere whim of a husband, even though we are petted and strung with jewels. Will you tell me why a woman cannot freely enter upon a reputable professional career?" And when she fixed her steadfast eyes upon him, glowing in a frank enthusiasm, for once in his life Hiram Bashford found himself without words. He simply said: "I will help you, my dear child, if I can, to justify the birthright of your splendid talents. Tell me all, that I may at least know one woman's heart. Speak to me as one who would know the inmost beatings of the pulse which tells you every fond hope." He had forgotten all his strategy and was, for the second time on this sweet morning, as clay in the hands of the potter, which demonstrated, in spite of his olden prejudices, that a noble heart was the companion of his fine mind, for he had found the way to be just, moved by the gentle pleading of the maiden's clear-lit eyes.

Hiram Bashford, an hour later, held serious commune with himself, as he closed the details of his bachelor packing. An overcoat, a check book and a black bag, equally stuffed with the best cigars and the most closely-knit legal papers, were his usual campaign outfit. His Delaware social occultation had brought down his man and his Websterian wardrobe of statesmanlike cut. As he smoothed his tangled iron gray hair, before the ordeal of a good-bye at breakfast, the lawyer pondered over the frank outpourings of the girl's heart. "God bless her!" he murmured. "With such a head and heart, she will make herself either the very happiest or unhappiest woman I know." He was vainly demanding of himself the outcome hid far away in the misty future, but down in his deep-welled heart he had registered a vow to aid the Greek-browed girl in treading a path which he feared would soon be a

lonely one. He had been astounded at the calm mental poise of this self-instructed Portia and he saw a clear reason now for further mixing up in Philip Ware's affairs. "She, the bright, brave girl, would help him, why not I?" And, to that end, he sought the library, where Philip Ware was already entrenched behind the Elzevirs of his first love and those yellow sheepskin volumes which had never been but unwelcome step-children. Marching directly on to his point, Bashford said gravely after his Good morning: "I have had a long talk with Madeleine. I am going to come down soon again and see you, but, only on one condition, Philip." His voice was very gentle when he answered the interrogation of Ware's eyes. "Promise me that if you get into any tangle with this Kaolin concern—if you are at all harassed by this chap Shearer—that you will let me help you out, and, mark me, help you in time." Philip Ware's stately head was bowed as he murmured, "I will, Hiram. You have my word." Bashford's face then lit up with a sudden glow of satisfaction. "And, as to Madeleine. Do you find her hopes promising from your standpoint?" "I find them so filled with new truths, with the glow of ideas yet strange to me, so promising, that I wish to keep her to the wish of her brave heart. I see no reason why she should not vindicate her claims to intellectual distinction. I can do this, if you, dear old friend, will allow me to earn her confidence, to be a sharer of all her veiled aspirations." Bashford's eyes were very kindly now.

"There's no one but you, Hiram," said Philip Ware, sadly, as he rose with a glance at the hateful clock. And the silent pledge of the night before was once more renewed. "I have to go down to Middletown for a few days on some business," remarked the Master of the Hall with an affected unconcern. "So you must either write or telegraph me when to expect you, and I beg you to prove to me that your Delaware days have been made pleasant. Come again. This quiet house is yours, when you will." Above, in the secret

parliament of the Ogontz graduates, at that very moment, Miss Florence Atwater was affixing the very last bit of her harmless war paint, preparatory to driving the departing legal luminary down to the station. She astounded Miss Madeleine Ware by the calm declaration of a sudden predilection for the sturdy visitor, which had leaped into life, that very morning.

"Maddy," she said decisively, as she pushed a great hatpin through one of Virot's most recent triumphs, "that is the sort of man I should like to marry. A man of heart and brains, a man of whom any woman could be proud. Of course, he's too old and all that, and, I suppose they will pester me till I choose among the men whom my lordly kin select for me, chosen from a 'railroad and pig iron' standpoint. I just love him—for his manly fairness to you—and, his great consideration. There! I mean it!" And Miss Atwater then fluttered away downstairs, with certain extempore roudades, which caused the wondering Bashford to fancy that a cove of warblers had just made a wild dash for freedom. Behind this dashing, lovely feminine hussar, Madeleine Ware came slowly down with happy, steadfast eyes, and a glow on her fair cheeks as of a sunrise flush upon the silver peaks of the Jungfrau. The New York lawyer was forced to admire the aplomb with which Miss Florence Atwater at the table gracefully led out the pledge wrung from the gentle host that his daughter should taste the waiting joys and dazzling splendors of the little Pennsylvanian's stronghold. "You young strategist," muttered Bashford as Ware, helpless in this fairy's hands, "unconditionally surrendered."

On the threshold of the stately old mansion, halloed by the unviolated hospitality of all the storied years, Bashford said adieu, for a brief time only, and then left the father and daughter standing there heart to heart, and hand in hand, linked in the invisible bond of golden love. It was a touching picture. The once strong man leaning upon the bright, brave girl who would gladly bring to his aid the freshness of her

plendid mind, glowing in the bright flood-tide of a peerless youth. But Miss Atwater's firm little hands guided the flying ponies, and the parthian darts of her diamond-splintered conversation were hurled directly at the man who was under the enchantment of these two dissimilar Lorelei. Demurrers and indictments, precedents and cases had never seemed so unwelcome in their hideously intertwined complexity as on this reezy morning, when the resolute little millionairess deliberately cross-examined him with the hardihood of a Root, a Choate or a Coudert. In amused embarrassment, Bashford cautiously answered, in the proportion of one to five, some of the eager queries of his sparkling-eyed companion. "This girl will pin me in a corner and then leave me impaled forever, helpless upon either horn of the dilemma, unless I take only the easiest questions," he smilingly decided. He artfully wiggled away from the imperious demand to know why woman was not the mental equal of man, and several other thrusts which smote him under the armor of the superior sex very sorely. He sadly answered the question as to the final outcome of superior mental gifts to individual women. "I fear the record of the past, Miss Florence, has been that the unusually gifted woman is destined to lead a life which is only one long-drawn-out agony. George Sand, George Eliot, Marie Bashkirtseff, Sonya Kovalefsky, Letitia Landon, Margaret Fuller, Madame de Staël, all of these seem to have laid aside the laurel of genius, at last, to vainly grope for the myrtle of love. These and countless others have proved only that the ultimate strength of a chain is its weakest, not its strongest link." "Then, you would dissuade woman from seeking the higher path," sharply said Miss Florence, accentuating the question with a stinging cut to her bones.

"By no means," gravely replied Bashford. "Because the race is now barred to women, it does not prove that they cannot run. If it has been barred, it does not prove it will be so, always. The fact of the general

exclusion of women from past active professional and intellectual careers does not prove such exclusion to be warranted by either law or justice, natural or divine. It is humiliating to see a world hang entranced on the shady memories of a Helen of Troy, a Mary Stuart, a Récamier, a Josephine, and then ignore a Vittoria Colonna, a Browning, a Krudener, a de Stael. Permit me, my dear child, to remark," said Bashford, "it is woman herself, who has set up this false standard in yielding to the personal desire to fascinate, the general effort to please. Moreover, there never yet was giant masculine intellect, great conqueror, or representative man who did not throw himself helplessly at the feet of mere beauty and humbly sue for the womanly love of his enslaver. Ah! The secret history of the great! The loves denied have changed the fate of other nations besides those where a willing Thais drew a conquering Alexander to her glowing breast."

"You then think that the woman's passions, her facile heart, her loves, stable or unstable, will always sway or dominate her head," said the anxious girl.

"It is love, in the active or passive form; love that is positive, or else the negative love turned to hate, which has locked the fetters so often on the wrists of great women. And only those whose heads have tempered their wandering hearts have 'arrived' at last. Semiramis, Cleopatra, Elizabeth of England; that greatest of woman rulers and rakes, Catherine of Russia—all these, played off the one nature against the other. And, ruled and loved."

"I see our goal nearing," smiled Florence. "Do you then advise modern women to shun the individual career? Must all fail because some do? Why should women, under our more liberal modern ideas, not face this unanswered question fairly, and many, very many, succeed?"

Bashford answered slowly, "I admit that scores, nay hundreds, of women are now better fitted for a career than many fairly successful professional men,

and have greater natural gifts. Competitive examinations and scholastic records prove this. Certainly, woman needs more scope. Her talents should have the fairest field, her hearing be patient and untrammelled. But it's, after all, only a question of self-control and staying power in the long run. We can easily grant to all women of talent a fair field. We can give educated woman more scope. She may even adopt the new social code which allows her to refuse the inevitable yoke of marriage, to delay or turn away the natural tide of womanly affection, but, what will ever control her double nature but her own self? Man's simple, selfish, practical persistence leads him on to the nearest mark set by interest or ambition. The woman's nature is duplex. Her affections are mutable and varying. Her strong desire for love and companionship sways with hidden forces the emotional womanly heart. Every woman is a mystery to herself, and the fable of King Cophetua and the beggar girl is often reversed. Hamlet's mother easily declined upon a lower nature in an illogical self-surrender. The strongest brained women sink the deeper in these unequal marriages. Singular gifts to your charming sex often bring a fatal blindness in choosing a man to trust. No, Miss Florence," said the lawyer decisively, "there is always 'the coming man' hovering between a great woman and any life path marked out 'on the heights.' Marriage is not the destiny of every woman, but the possibility of marriage is at once her goad, her fond dream and—her tyrant. Look at the sudden descent to natural emotions, to the merely conventional code of marriage, in George Eliot's riper age, when she chose a man unheard of in her own intellectual world, and a score of years her junior, as an idol to look up to. We can all trust women, when they can trust themselves," gravely said Bashford, as the ponies were adroitly pulled up at the train. Miss Florence Atwater sat pouting and dissatisfied, whip in hand. "You have not told me half the things I must know. I shall claim the rest at my home. I wish to

“speak to you about my own marriage, about all these other things, too.”

“As to your marriage, my dear young prospective hostess,” laughed Bashford, “I predict it, with great confidence. You will marry soon.”

“Not until I have looked carefully into the subject, Judge,” very defiantly rejoined the young seeker after truth. “And not until I have had a very pleasant time, for a couple of seasons,” added the little queen. As Bashford’s man approached with the tickets, the lawyer whispered: “You will marry before this appointed time, with your own heartfelt consent, and, like all ladies, break the rules you set up yourself.” Miss Florence only laughed merrily as she gave both her slender hands to the departing guest. “I like you, because you have not trifled with me. You and I must help Madeleine. I will tell you a great secret,” and she stood up on tip toes to whisper. “If I did not have all this money and the other things, you know, I would study law with Madeleine. I do believe that we women have a right to show the world what we can do.”

Hiram Bashford deliberately raised her hands and kissed them, gloves and all. “You would demoralize my profession,” he said almost tenderly. “I thank God Madeleine has your love and friendship for a mantle. She may need it.” “But you will help her for my sake?” pleaded the generous girl. “For your sake, for her own dear sake, and for the sake of her noble father, my lifelong friend.” The train then bore the visitor swiftly away, leaving Miss Florence gazing after its thundering course with kindling eyes. And her graceful memory clung to the departing man so that the long way to New York was haunted by the bright smile of the fresh-hearted girl. Miss Florence, on that very evening, bore away Madeleine Ware in triumph to the shady glens and splendid lawns of her wealth-gemmed walls at Williamsport. The happy parting of the little circle was only the earnest of the promised reunion and the future shone out never so

fair before them all. There was all the brightness of life and love clinging to the two happy women as they wandered under the stars that night in the lovely wildness of Castle Atwater's gardens. With tenderest love, a joint telegram was dispatched to the lonely Hall, where Philip Ware mused alone, thankful that a new shield had now been lifted up between his darling child and the blackening clouds of that future which in his secret misgivings he had feared to face. And Shearer's suit lost some of its terrors. "He must not ruin Madeleine's life," mused Judge Ware.

Hiram Bashford sat late at dinner that night in a vantage coign of his favorite New York club. It seemed to him that the light of a newer day was now shining upon him. The fresh hopes and audacious beliefs of the two aspiring women whom he had quitted so lately seemed to throw down the olden walls of his mental isolation. By a strangely happy chance he had fallen upon one of Yale's brightest and best professors as a dinner guest. Grimly ejaculating, "I will now go to school a little," Bashford bore off his prey in triumph. For this scholar, a sound, ripe man, he had known and loved for years. He was one who lived in a daily touch with the men and women of the later day. A man bound to his fellow men by all the bonds of a hearty, cordial brotherly love. And deftly did Bashford ply this escaped college don with question on question, until he glowed himself with a newly-lit fire of budding enthusiasm. Over the oysters and Chablis, Bashford darted his queries born of the strange communion with the young innocents. All the way back to his lonely home the great lawyer pondered that night on the Professor's parting words. "I cannot guarantee the final success of educated women in the open struggle of later professional life," the Don summed up, "but I do know that hundreds of women are far beyond our medium masculine students now—far and away beyond. There's no question of their mental fitness. As to the practical question of indiscriminate business association, women must meet that

themselves by new social regulations and a wisely tempered self-control. The mere society women, the occupants of luxurious homes, the attractive women of our splendid private life, are not even there free from insidious social assault or vicious temptation. The professional woman only has to guard herself similarly and be always true to herself. I learned after twenty years my own declared mistake as to the matter of co-education. The once hostile college presidents of America are beginning to admit that the grave disorders supposed to accompany the free mingling of the sexes in our halls of learning have never appeared. It is but just to the women students of America to say that they have banished that old-time bugaboo, and I have put myself on record thereto officially. It only rests with the modern woman to make herself great, and to still remain guarded in wisdom, fortified with a stable character. God speed them all on their upward way in this broadening path. Equal rights, equal pay, equal meed for work well done, is my motto."

It so fell out that Hiram Basnrord dreamed long and happily that night of the fair one and the dark one, whose kindly eyes followed him even in his dreams, and he slept the sleep of the just and righteous man. He recked not in his welcome rest that Philip Ware sat far away, shut up alone in his library, under the fading glimmering lamps of midnight, with a blank sorrow convulsing his worn features. There was a crushing disaster to face!

For the loving telegram of the two happy girls had fluttered down to his feet, and he clutched in his trembling hands the village evening paper, in which, glaringly displayed, were the ominous words, "Failure of the Middletown Kaolin Company."

His ashen lips only moved at last to murmur, "Ruin, beggary, and—my Madeleine will soon be homeless." It was a defeated, shrinking, hopeless man who painfully climbed to the care-haunted bed chamber above that night, as he aimlessly faltered, "Yes, I must go

down there at once. I must see Shearer. Yes, at once," for he even now, feared to tell Hiram Bashford that the Hall domain was swept away in this final calamity. "Those notes, those notes, that fatal speculation," was the refrain of the last sleepless night which he was doomed to pass under the friendly shelter of the quaint old homestead of his happy boyhood. For, the house of Ware was not founded on the rock of a successful miserly common sense. He was not of the preyers, but of the preyed upon, in this bubble world of ours. The old Delaware gentleman's silken armor of courtesy and faith in all men was not proof against the sly fence of the banditti of the money market, the merciless gladiators of gain. It was late when Philip Ware left his darkened home to meet the swarming sharks now fighting over the spoils of the bubble Kaolin Company, into which he had ventured at the suggestion of his false friend, Mr. Robert Shearer.

He had wandered through the vacant halls of his birthplace vainly seeking for the presence of the dear nestling who had brought all the brightness into his lonely life. "Poor Maddy," he whispered, as he stood alone in that vacant room which was still haunted by the presence of the high-souled child whom he had ruined. He stooped and picked up a blue ribbon which her hand had lightly cast away in the hurry of departure. "She is spared at least one day's sorrow." And he straightway sent a message to the telegraph office, whose loving words filled the heart of his absent child with happiness in those far away blue Pennsylvanian hills. He had softly closed the door of that virginal room, whose freshness and maidenly simplicity of arrangement spoke to him in the eloquent silence of his throbbing heart. "I must go and try to save something out of the wreck—something for Maddy."

Old Reuben, proud of the glossy blacks fretting at the door, was struck with the ashen pallor of the Master's face, as he turned at the door as if to in-

voke the aid of his shadowy ancestors in the coming hours of trial. "Perhaps Shearer will not press the notes," he vainly murmured, as he painfully clambered into the victoria. Yet at his heart, there was a gloomy foreboding that the price of favor might be a slavish support in the lumbering love-making of this crafty speculator who now had him in his power. It was the bitterest anguish of all.

"There's something wrong with the Squire," mourned old Reuben, as he drove away in silence. "I never saw him look like that." And something was wrong with the Squire, as he wrangled late that afternoon with the disgruntled ravens pouncing on the wreck of the Kaolin Company at Middletown village. There was a lonely vigil that night in which the defeated, despairing man at last found refuge in the thought, "I will go on at once to New York and tell Hiram Bashford the story of my fatal folly." And one dear, beloved head rested afar that night in happy, rosy dreams, buoyed up by girlish hope—dreams destined to a sad awakening.

CHAPTER III.

COUNSELOR BASHFORD WEAKENS.

Morning, bright, golden and serene, rolled up the curtains of the crimson East and flashed golden javelins against the windows of Hiram Bashford's stately New York home. Rosy and rugged, the counselor, in great good humor, commenced a half hour with the busy world over his Herald, reinforced the flesh with a measured breakfast of substantial cheer, and then departed to struggle with the devil in his fortified legal den, hung high in air on William Street. The Sun God lovingly called up the two Ogontz com-

rades to the companionship of the roses already nodding expectant of them in the leafy gardens of Castle Atwater. And the lances of the sun darted in later, at the gloomy, shadowed windows of a dingy Middletown inn, where Philip Ware awoke to the crushing realization of a disaster which would sweep away the last stronghold of his line.

The old Squire was early astir, for he now awaited the final dictation of Robert Shearer, plausible in the past, truculent and insolent in the hour of trouble. There was scant ceremony in Shearer's morning greeting when the two men met. The man of money was morosely vulgar.

"Of course, I will have to stay here and protect the interests of the bank," said Shearer, after a perfunctory nod. "I see no use in you lingering here. There's not much to be done now." He regarded Ware with the quiet satisfaction of a man who held the "whip-hand" at last, and had a purpose in his demeanor. The ruined Squire had pleaded on the first jarring encounter for various schemes of extension and delay. It seemed to him so strange that the roseate aureole of prosperity had vanished forever from the venture whose carefully worded prospectus had been worded "to the queen's taste." "Is there no way to set up the company on a new basis?" anxiously pleaded the ruined man. "Well, Ware, you know how these things go," said Shearer. "I fancy that the bank will have to buy the whole concern in. It might go ahead then. That is," he cautiously said, "with the old stock wiped out. The thing will now at least pay expenses. But the original holders ought to be lucky if they get out without future suits for a pro rata assessment." Philip Ware now knew the whole record of mismanagement, of the dead counter currents, from the very first, of the cautiously secured claims of the local National Bank, just as fiercely ravenous as any of the larger cormorants of the money tyranny. "And my notes, my notes," he murmured. "Well, you know there's no use crying over spilled milk. They must

be met. I must protect the bank, you know." And the heavy-jowled Mr. Robert Shearer strutted to the window, thrusting his pudgy hands in his pockets. He looked out toward those far Pennsylvanian mountains which hid from him the woman his sullen heart burned for. He thought now that he saw a shorter way to the altar than before the crash of the rotten Kaolin concern. The spectacle of the future Mrs. Robert Shearer submissively maneuvering the tea cups at his table, ere he departed to assume the morning scepter of financial control at Wilmington's one "solid" bank, was a delightful vision of the coming time.

"Can you not get me a little time—time to turn around, and try and save my home?" pleaded the ruined lawyer. "Well, if you can get two good names on the notes, I may ask the bank to extend them a year, as good assets—interest paid, and all that," replied the cashier. "I will see what I can do," abjectly faltered Ware. "It is ruin to me, ruin, Mr. Shearer," said the old patrician, "and I went in on your advice, you know. It seems even now an unexplained crash, the bottom falling out of the whole thing at once." His eyes were feebly hostile. And then and there, Mr. Robert Shearer deemed it his duty to squelch these smouldering sparks of discontent. "You must stand up and take your medicine like a man," he roughly said. "In stocks, every man looks out for himself." The burly cashier did not deem it necessary to inform his dupe that he had unloaded his whole holding of the worthless stock, gained "in the organization" "for services," upon his professedly "best friend," and, for a secret purpose.

Philip Ware then turned and faced his secret foe. The gallant spirit of his ancestors shone out in the clear, unflinching gaze with which he met this brutal sally. Dazed as he was, he had noted the absence of the faintest expression of regret. "You have no right to speak that way, Shearer," he simply said. "You

led me into this thing, and you have ruined me. You might at least have warned me."

The banker faced the ruined man in a dull, hostile surprise. "Now, if you had only made my interests your own, if you had been sensible in that affair of your daughter——"

"Stop! Stop! Sir! Not another word!" cried the pale-faced scholar, his eyes aflame. He pointed to the door with a trembling finger, but it was the rage of his awakened fatherly tenderness, not the infirmity of years, which made that quivering finger a sign of moment to the baffled dullard.

As Robert Shearer lumbered down the stairs he swore a great oath. "By God, I'll sell the old Hall over his head and then marry this minx there, after I have bought it in. These notes are all past due and I'll force them on the jump from to-day. And then I will just train Mrs. Shearer up a bit, to my own satisfaction. I'll keep him out of the grounds. That's what I'll do." With the departure of his enemy, Philip Ware sank back into a chair. His spiritual insight was quickened at last. The scales had fallen from his eyes. The gross desire to dominate that pure young life, to besmear the altar of the young girl's innocent heart shone out all too plainly in the eyes of the eager creditor. For Robert Shearer was of that class of men whose measured, lingering, gloating glances defile helpless woman at a distance more brutally than even the outstretched hand of passion. Philip Ware groaned as he thought of the wild day dream which he had conjured up two years before when the vivacious Miss Atwater departed on her European dress parade tour. The tell-tale eagerness of his dear child's eyes when, with a pallid face, she proudly declined a visit to the Old World as the guest of the little feminine Croesus, had led him on to speculate in hopes of seeing her, too, shine afar, yet tenderly near. "Ah, Maddy, darling! It was for you I planned and dreamed those foolish dreams, and fell into this brute's trap." Ware was walking now in the glaring sun-

light of awakened reason. For Hiram Bashford's direct road, "across lots," had pierced the lines of Shearer's artful intrenchments. Behind the professions of olden friendship the real man lay unveiled before him. False, sensual, crafty, mean, base and sly. "He shall not have her. He may take the Hall, but, by heaven, I will go out into the world with my darling. Together we will work for brighter coming days. I have sat idle in the shadows here when I should have been fighting in the open like Bashford. I will go to him now. I will tell him all." For in his heart, humble and repentant, he feared not now to unburden himself to the friend of his youth. "It may make it lighter for Maddy. God bless my own darling," he murmured, as he hastened his brief preparations for fleeting. "Shall I tell her now?" he pondered as he glanced at the time tables. "No. I will send her words of cheer from New York after I have seen Hiram." And, with a stately dignity, he departed for the little village station. As the hats were lifted, right and left, that morning the simple Middletown folk who knew and loved him said: "The Squire takes it very hard."

And one poor old crone to whom he gave an accustomed dole, pausing in his sorrows to be mindful of others, shuddered and drew her tattered rags around her as she croaked, "There's death in his face. There's death in his face."

Mr. Robert Shearer lurked along, wolf-like, on the trail and with lowering brow, muttered: "I'll take a later train, and make a legal demand on the notes tomorrow. Presentment and non-payment will give me the chance to bring him at once to his knees. And the bride to be may learn to see things then in a different light." In which sly arrangement of triumphant torture of the despoiled victim, Mr. Robert Shearer, for all his clerkly craft, was doomed to be forever disappointed.

"Gone to New York, has he?" threateningly ruminated the octopus usurer that night. "I'll nail him the

very moment he comes back from York and serve the papers. He will not get away from me." Brute, stock jobber and crafty swindler as he was, Shearer's self-complacency was shaken as he drove up to the station that night to take the Wilmington train. "Sorry, sir," said the station agent, "no train to-night. Road blocked with a serious accident. We're just sending the wreckers up. And your friend, Judge Ware, is among the killed." The man's voice died away in a husky whisper as Shearer tottered away with a pale face, avoiding the crush of the rapidly gathering crowd.

On his way to battle against fate for the dear one he had impoverished, Philip Ware had been called away to a world where no creditor serves papers, and he had got away from Robert Shearer forever. Far, far away, beyond the "proud man's contumely" and dying with the half framed name of his darling on his lips, the simple scholar ended his blameless life with no blackened shadow of crime or wrong dimming the honored name he bore. The stroke of the high gods found him ready in the guileless serenity of his honest heart. And Madeleine Ware, happy in heart, far away, was an orphaned and penniless girl—alone in the world.

There was some impish persistency in the street arab who pursued Counselor Bashford as he wormed his way out of busy William Street that evening, joining the reflux tide of New York's workers, great and small, pouring uptown. The jumbled words, "Terrible railroad acciden' Delaware, forty kill'd 'n' wound'd," smote upon his ear. "Good God!" cried Bashford as he glanced over the flaring black head lines. Some fatal fascination had impelled him to turn and grasp a journal from the sheaf, tossing the boy a dime. The great lawyer staggered into a drug store near by and seated himself there. He was deaf to the inquiries of the alarmed apothecary, for he knew not that his face showed all the agony of a sudden sorrow. There the cruel lines were spread out before him in paragraphic flourishes of conventional elegance. There were sud-

den tears in eyes which had long been unused to weeping, veiling the words, as the burly legal giant scanned the column given up to the disaster. It was a call to action which roused him like a bugle blast.

"Ah! I must go to Madeleine at once!" he cried, as he threw the fateful journal away. For he had already read the special paragraph devoted to his dead friend. Every word seemed burned into his brain. He could close his eyes and see the fatal lines in all their ghastly curtness.

"Among the victims of this appalling disaster, was Judge Philip Ware, of Newcastle, the scion of an old Delaware family and favorably known to bench and bar. The deceased gentleman's stately home was the rallying point of the local gentry. Judge Ware, who leaves an only daughter, was returning from Middletown, where he had been called by the failure of the Middletown Kaolin Company, in which he was a large stockholder. The many prominent citizens who attended the creditors' meeting at Middletown were saved from the fate of their lamented friend by waiting for the Wilmington accommodation. The deceased gentleman was on his way to New York upon the 'special flyer,' which collided with a wild freight train. It is rumored that the dead jurist's fortune was entirely swept away in the failure of the great manufacturing company, in which disastrous speculation he had imprudently embarked," etc. In a few moments the lawyer sprang to his feet. His friend had perished coming to see him. He seemed now to hear a beloved voice calling to him, "Go to Madeleine! Go to her at once!"

"Brayton," he cried to the anxious druggist, "here, ring me up a messenger boy and a coupé. Give me some telegraph blanks and a sheet of note paper." Behind the desk his flying fingers were soon tracing lines with lightning rapidity. "There, send these two telegrams. Give me an umbrella and your overcoat. Send my man right on to Williamsport after me. Give him this note. To the Herdic House. Ah, yes. Give me a

hundred dollars. I've got to catch the Pennsylvania train."

He sprang into the coupé, leaving the astounded business man behind him gaping in mute surprise. But his managing clerk, Withers, knew a half hour later that a week's postponement "for sickness of counsel," would keep the "Pacific Mail's" destiny hanging in suspense till Bashford's return. And on the fateful wires, leaping along with the speed of thought to Castle Atwater, were these words of cheer:

"I am coming to you. Await me. Trust to me for all." The stern signature, "Hiram Bashford," spoke of a man who had suddenly thrown aside the prejudices of an egoistic life. "Poor Madeleine. My poor child," the excited man murmured, as he was whirled along the narrow street, followed by the general curses of the jostled wayfarers. "You shall study law, you shall do anything you wish to, if you can find in aught, the means to drown this sudden sorrow."

Practical, even in his exaltation of sudden sympathy, Bashford's quick mind leaped over all the gaps in the past. The whole game lay clearly outlined before him. "The low brute," growled Bashford. "He juggled the remnants of poor Philip's fortune away from him. I suppose that even the Hall will have to go. And he will now try to hound the girl down in the 'honorable' brutality of a forced marriage."

Suddenly a light spread over the stern man's face. "I am a fool," he very unjustly decided. "Of course, he can only collect the money, his claim and costs. I'll buy the Hall myself and give it to Madeleine. She can set up a law college of one there and so graduate herself." He fiercely smoked a cigar as he impatiently glared at the lights of Hoboken nearing him. Counselor Bashford had weakened. He had cast aside the cherished code of many long years, at the glance of that Greek-browed girl's steadfast eyes, and he was pledged now to aid and abet her exceedingly rash resolve. It was a weakness of which he was dimly conscious—an intellectual "change of base"—"for no sufficient cause"

save the infinite love and tenderness which had entered into his lonely heart unawares. And so he sped on to the rescue, conscious of his weakness, and all unconscious that in that weakness was exceeding strength! For the great flood tides of unselfish love swelling up in the human heart do not register themselves. They simply burst the bounds of self-interest and are not gauged by the petty inch tapes of every-day life.

At Hoboken, the advocate bethought him to send on a telegram, marked "strictly private," to Miss Florence Atwater, Castle Atwater, Williamsport. "It may yet cut off the tidings until I can be there to help her to bear it!" mused the great-hearted man.

It was two o'clock in the silent watches of a crystalline night when Bashford stepped out upon the platform at Williamsport. All these long hours, men who knew him feared to break in upon the stern, gloomy reserve of his self commune in the smokers' compartment. His eyes were set in a firm resolve, and no man knew that they were fixed upon the distant figure of his elected enemy, that singularly energetic financier, Mr. Robert Shearer! There was a fitness in this midnight duel of minds across two states—for Cashier Robert Shearer was now bending under the green shades in the Wilmington National Bank, in cautious conclave with counsel. Even at that late hour he was "preparing" to take the usual steps in such cases "to protect the interests of the bank." He had not neglected his own interests while toiling "for the bank," as was evidenced by the singular apparition which greeted Hiram Bashford on the platform at Williamsport. "I have my own carriage waiting! But—I must first speak to you alone here—even before we drive home! I have something to show you!" It was little Miss Millions, no longer a dazzling fairy, but a sad-eyed spirit of the night, whose splendid dark eyes were fringed with tear-gemmed lashes. "Poor Madeleine! Poor darling!" she breathed in a voice as tender as the forest requiems over the "Last Rose!" "Did you get my telegram, Judge Bashford?" "Miss Florence! My sweet child! You

here, at this time of night?" gasped the astonished man. "I knew that you would come on at once if you heard the news," she simply said. And the little hand trembled as Bashford raised it and kissed it there under the twinkling stars. He could have folded that sweet, devoted champion to his heart, for she stood there, transfigured by love into a guardian angel. "I have not told her yet! I stole away at once, for this telegram came from that man Shearer! I had myself received one from the conductor, who fortunately escaped. He knew that Madeleine was with me, for—for," and there was a broken sob, "dear Uncle Philip was going to see you, and then coming on to take Maddy home. He had asked the conductor about the trains." They entered the waiting rooms, and there, by the flickering kerosene, Bashford read the words of the author of the ruin which had wrecked the house of Ware. A fierce oath escaped him as he scanned them.

"Have taken charge of all in your absence. Rely on me alone in this emergency. Must see you at once about your own business matters. Come on at once. Will meet you at the train. Answer."

When the lawyer had read the signature, "Robert Shearer," he became suddenly aware of his escaped wrath. "Never mind! I don't blame you!" cried Miss Florence, with flashing eyes. "But for him, poor Maddy would not be an orphan to-night! Oh! You must watch over her!" cried the little millionairess. "Let my house be her home; but you must watch over her alone!" And, strange to say, the brave little woman looked up into Hiram Bashford's strong, resolute face from the shelter of his clasping arms—for he had clasped the loyal girl to his breast.

"There, now! It's all right! Just let me send a telegram," he cried, with mock cheerfulness, as he deposited the agitated little beauty in a cosy seat. "I will only be away a minute." He stole a glance at her transfigured face, all tears and loving kindness, as he scrawled a sufficiently direct telegram. "Sprite and angel, dear, brave little one!" were the words he mur-

mured, looking at the exhausted girl, whose eyes had relaxed in a half slumber; but he wrote hurriedly—as follows:

“Robert Shearer,

“Wilmington National Bank:

“Take no steps as regards Miss Ware’s interests. Am coming with her. Hold everything for my arrival.

“Hiram Bashford, Attorney.”

In the half hour’s drive to the magnificent domain where sorrow’s wing was shading the splendors of the luxuriant home, Hiram Bashford, the strong man leaning upon a reed, softly said: “Florence! Miss Florence! I cannot tell her this news! Are you brave enough for a task which turns a strong man back?” The girl’s face was pale as her eyes gave him the promise, and it was on her faithful breast that Madeleine’s head lay in the first sad hour of her conscious orphanhood. And then, the beautiful day came on, flushing the Pennsylvanian hills with a glory of God’s brightness, veiled forever to the dear dim eyes afar, now looking out beyond these mortal bars.

Hiram Bashford, after a brisk morning walk, in which the varied beauties of the mountain Paradise were first made known to him, awaited Miss Atwater at seven o’clock in the library, where once her father directed his own eddy of the huge Pennsylvania money maelstrom. A touching dignity of sorrow gave a queenly grace to the little lady who entered, simply saying: “I am ready now, Judge. I have telegraphed for my brothers. They are dear men, and helpful—although they have not found out yet that I am a woman, and have a head and heart of my own! Had I not better bring Madeleine on, under Hugh’s escort? He will do anything I ask him to,” she smiled sadly, “and he is the head of our family. If you go on the early train you can checkmate this coarse intruder, Shearer,” and the flashing dark eyes were tear-veiled, as she sobbed, “Madeleine can see her dear old father at home, for the

last time! Not under the keeping of careless strangers! I know that you will do this for me! And, so, Madeleine will be better able to meet you—there, where we were all so happy—but the other day!”

The stern man of the rougher world gazed in open admiration at the bright, resolute little heiress. “The carriage is already ordered. I send one of my men down with you, and Madeleine says ‘God bless you!’ That you are to do all in her name!”

And even in the fulness of the national fame, which had been to him sweeter than woman’s love—the lonely man sighed as he followed the young chatelaine into the breakfast room. “If I were twenty-five years younger,” he murmured, “I would give some of these Pennsylvania men a race for that little angel’s hand! Head and heart! She has both! God bless her!” He drove away to the station a half hour later, speaking earnest words of cheer to the woman by his side. Neither of them saw the pale face at the window which silently watched their departure in the royal solitude of the chamber of sorrow. But Madeleine Ware’s heart went out with them! Too well the girl knew that she was alone in the world now! A stranger within the gates! But, for the dear dead one, and these loyal friends, she vowed to be all that they would have fondly dreamed.

“I am in your hands,” softly said Florence, as the lawyer made his adieux. “Command me and my brothers! I want Madeleine to feel that she is not friendless—if she is fatherless!”

“My dear child,” gravely answered Bashford, “we will all find a way to stand near to her, between her and the chill blasts of the future. But, first, let me find out the general facts, and then we can knit up our little circle of protectors. There is even such a thing as friendly intrusion! Poor Madeleine! My old friend’s orphaned girl! Her head and heart need all the rest we can give them now. Let the billows roll over now, and we will then move up to her aid! You are the only one fitted to be near her in these first sad days. For,”

he sighed, "the moaning of the sea of change will break in upon her soon enough! I fear that all is swept away! There may even have to be another home provided!"

"Not so!" smiled the Pennsylvanian girl. "Maddy has two homes always! One in my heart—the other is the one you have just left! While I live, there is all waiting for her there which my dear father's generous provision has showered upon me!"

They parted in silence, and as Bashford watched her swift wheels flashing back homewards, they seemed to him to be brightly shining as angel wings. "And—we criticise our women!" mused the traveler, as the train sped away. "I have at last learned that the first touch of trouble can transform a butterfly into a ministering angel." His lonely life had hidden from him the potent fact that in the heart of every woman worthy of that holy name lurks the imprisoned seraphs of love and unselfish devotion!

It was three days later when, from far and near, the country side gathered in the great halls of the old mansion where Philip Ware lay in the majesty of Death. All had known and honored the gentle scholar, and scores of them had loved him passing well. A simple, modest country gentleman in whom there was no guile! When the white-robed clergyman lifted up his voice, a sigh of tender sympathy broke the chastened silence of the vast rooms. From the opened doors, the faithful colored servants watched the last sad rites in awe. Even in the impressive solemnity of the last hour, as Hiram Bashford led a stately figure robed in deepest black to the head of the bier, followed by Hugh Atwater and the bright-eyed comforter, the local magnates present were aware of the conspicuous absence of Mr. Robert Shearer! It was true that delegations from the bench and bar—that all the organized societies of the vicinity—testified the grief of the proud old state for its beloved son.

Probably Mr. Robert Shearer, closeted in his own fortress-like home, did not care to confide to anyone the details of his preliminary interview with that most

energetic representative, Hiram Bashford, of New York. Shearer had been unnerved by the cool decision with which Bashford swept him out of any possible connection with the obsequies, or the future affairs of the orphan.

"It will be quite unnecessary for us to meet, Mr. Shearer," sternly said Hiram. "I have retained Messrs. Jarvis and Thorn to represent me here, locally, and any business you may have with Miss Ware may be addressed to them or to myself. You will see the propriety of leaving her undisturbed in her private sorrow, and in this crushing financial calamity, brought about by you alone!"

"I shall have some immediate business with the estate," sullenly ejaculated Shearer. "Then, transact it with Jarvis! He tells me that he knows you very well! He will be appointed by the Orphan's Court. There was no will left." Had Shearer been a brighter man he would not have ventured on his last sally: "It may make a difference to Miss Madeleine about the Hall! If I only could see her, I might arrange some plan! Her father was about to turn it over to me as security for his unpaid notes which I now hold!"

"I thought the bank held them?" Bashford sternly said, with an ugly gleam in his eye. "I had to take them up!" insolently replied Shearer, "to save my own financial position with the bank. They were all discounted, at my personal request, by the directors! We had an instant meeting about them. You see my position! The amount is a large one—over one hundred thousand dollars."

Hiram Bashford turned on him like a wounded lion at bay. "I know they were made, at your request, and on your instigation and plausible representations. I would advise you to let your own lawyer handle them with Jarvis! Look here—Mr. Robert Shearer!" said Hiram. "You affect to misunderstand me! If you approach that plundered girl, or cross the limits of the Hall grounds—if you dare to show that cringing face of yours at my friend's funeral—I will—break—your

—neck! You shall not look again on the face of the man you robbed till you meet it at the Judgment Bar, you damned scoundrel!" And when Mr. Robert Shearer lifted his eyes he was sitting alone. He found it convenient to "enjoy" a sudden fit of illness on the day when Philip Ware was laid at rest in the old family tomb by the side of the loved and lost. While the yawning granite was gaping to receive the poor shell from which the spirit had fled, the cashier walked the floor of his self-imposed prison chamber. "I will buy the Hall over her head—and turn her out into the street! And, I'll put the whole line of the dead Wares out into the Potter's Field!" Such was the gentle frame of mind of the man who felt that his gentle prey had escaped him. And he knew, too, that he was wise in his generation—for all men said so! All men bowed the knee to the great cashier of the Wilmington Bank! Truly great—in a small way!

On the evening when Madeleine Ware felt herself for the first time really alone in the world, Hiram Bashford and Hugh Atwater sat long in conference in the lonely library where all spoke so vividly of the dead scholar.

For the room seemed filled with whispers
As they looked at the vacant seat!

Morally brave as man may be, Bashford felt humbled when he realized that it was to Florence Atwater, who had gained a new dignity by her fortitude, that they had allotted the sad task of acquainting Madeleine with her financial ruin. After the dinner, presided over by Mrs. Bradford, the old housekeeper, cased in gloomy armor of shining satin, they had called the Little Lady down from the "fair upper chamber," where Madeleine lay prone upon the bed whose pillow a fond father had kissed in his last unconscious farewell! They had found Madeleine's blue ribbon in his pocketbook. It had been dear to him, for it was the very last thing she had touched before her departure for the carefully

contrived pleasure jaunt. And Bashford had quickly caught this sign of the delicate tenderness of the man who had clung to that amulet of love on the day of his final defeat and disaster. The ribbon was resting over the great heart of the burly lawyer now! The two men had faced the problem of the disclosure of bankruptcy. Hugh Atwater, great, bronzed, bearded giant of thirty—a strong son of Anak—brushed his moistened eyes with the hand which daily signed checks for fortunes. “I cannot help to break that poor, helpless girl’s heart! I’ll stand in on anything, Judge Bashford! Leave this thing to Florry! She is a wonderful little woman! You and I can do something else. Now, I know this poor girl’s proud heart will break if she is thrust out of this old home! The web of her life is woven around every nook and corner of the Hall! Can’t we save it for her?” “Let me engineer this awkward business, Atwater!” answered Bashford, with a peculiar smile. “If your sister will induce Madeleine to go home with her, I will have Mrs. Bradford at once send on there all the surroundings most dear to her. I have already ordered Jarvis to save all the personal property, and he will put a good man in here at once to catalogue and arrange it. The first thing is to occupy Madeleine’s mind, and in this, this legal dream of hers may aid us.” The generous Pennsylvanian had admiringly dispatched his sister on her mission. “Florry! If you can take her home within a week, and keep her, too, from breaking her heart, you shall have the best diamond necklace in Tiffany’s when you have made up your mind about Jimmy Renwick!” The little Princess fled away with suddenly crimsoning cheeks, as she met the astonished glances of Hiram Bashford’s eyes. “Oh! It’s all made up!” said Atwater, interpreting the Judge’s mute query. “Boy and girl love, and—they were made for each other. Florry appears to ignore the impending crisis! Renwick is the finest fellow in Pennsylvania and will soon foreclose and get a ‘controlling interest!’ Now, promise me, that you will let me ‘chip in’ in whatever you do, Mr. Bashford,” said

Atwater. "I have a dozen company meetings awaiting me. I will not oppress Maddy Ware with any sense of personal obligation, but I do claim an even half of your blind pool! I can see already that you are bound to save this home!" "Trust me, Atwater! I'll call on you soon enough!" said the New Yorker, "and I'll go up to town with you myself to-morrow. I wish Miss Florence to take Madeleine at once away. I have posted Jarvis, and I wish this brute, Shearer, to think that we are going to let things take their course. It disarms him!" The men joined hands in a clasp of new-made brotherhood—the royal Brotherhood of Man! Happy-hearted, and with life stretching out fair before him, young Atwater easily chilled under the ceremonious decorum of the house from which the dead scholar had been borne away. Already unseen spectres seemed to be pointing "The way out!" and the frightened servants, too, felt the loosening of the olden ties! In little knots they now moved around, half-hearted, for "coming events" cast their grim shadows before! Bashford, too, could not abandon the great professional interests in his charge. There was the Pacific Mail on a lee shore!

"As to her residence, and her healthful occupation—I have a plan," soberly remarked the New Yorker. "Work alone will lift her out of the gloom of the coming days! Only work! For, even the tenderest sympathy points ever to the unhealed wound! We cannot help it! Thank God for work! It saved me from going mad, when—when—" He did not finish—but hearty Hugh Atwater was not wrong in divining the reason of Bashford's feverish devotion to the drudgery of law. It had turned his eyes far away from the spot where a white stone bore, in far Greenwood, the fatal date when Love had stood with inverted torch—a mute warder—over the lost Lenore of the strong man's golden youth. Bashford went on speaking as if in a dream. "I have only talked an hour with Madeleine! I can bear my own crosses, and carry the heavy burden of life to the end of my days. But—I cannot witness the suf-

fering of this noble girl without being unmanned! Her wild project of the practice of law may be the best resource of us all, and lead her up to peace, perhaps, finally to happiness!" The two men's eyes met in silence.

"God grant it," solemnly answered Atwater, with kindling eyes. "She is gifted?" "Marvelously so!" gravely replied Bashford. "Now, I hate all dissembling, and I would not—I dare not—palter with this aspiring woman's best hopes. I have talked it all over, secretly, with your sister. Madeleine can be kept in your immediate vicinity. Watch over her! Let Miss Florence minister to her heart! I will, from afar, watch over the matters of the head. She can easily take a systematic course of law lectures and private study at Lehigh University. I have given Miss Florence an 'open sesame' letter to the president there—a man of our old class. He will guard Philip Ware's daughter as the very apple of his eye! I'll write to him privately. But I do not wish her to feel that we are pushing her along!"

"And then, after she is prepared?" demanded the clear-eyed young finance baron. "Ah! There is the rub!" said Bashford, with a troubled brow. "The state of New York does not yet welcome women to the profession, but I have promised her to give her a couple of years in the inner circles of our own great business. She will not feel there that she is 'a stranger within the gates!' I'll guard her with my very life! Perhaps she may have a fair field in some of the newer Western communities. There is a larger view of life out there than in the old Thirteen!" musingly said Bashford. "Now, the South has always fenced in its fine women with Quixotic chivalry. In the North and East, men trample them down, and perhaps the sun of wisdom may be even broader in the sunset region! This new life will content her, while you and I stand by and guard the wreck! I'm going to give this fellow Shearer a devil of a fight, Atwater! I shall go after him—personally—when the estate is all settled up, and try and recover the amount of the notes on the ground of

'fraudulent representation!' But, first, the place must be sold, and we must bid it in!"

"Sold—sold at auction! Why, this place has been two hundred years in the family!" cried Atwater, springing up. "Ah! My young friend!" sadly said Bashford. "The average American family has hardly a prosperous life for a single generation! We are all centripetal! The chase for the dollar—the manufacturing code, has made us all egoists, and 'tout passe, tout lasse, tout casse' is but too true a proverb now!"

"I don't like the idea of Madeleine living alone in New York!" anxiously said Hugh Atwater. He had been a bit of a man of the world in his fiery "wander-jahre." "It can't be helped," sighed Bashford. "She is one who will go on to the end, 'ohne hast, ohne rast!' Women, after all, are only of two classes, the hunters and the hunted! There is no semblance of safety for an attractive woman but in marriage. Poor as this defense is, it's the only system of fortification for the sex. And, with an infinite tenderness, behind the flimsy walls of our strange social system, woman—with beating heart—awaits her dearest foe!"

"And, so, you think the only profession really open to women is the matrimonial jugglery? The competitive beauty show! The almost indelicate parade of mutely offered charms!" said the Pennsylvanian. "I do not approve the laws of social life! I only state them. I fear that it is too true!" rejoined the lawyer. "And—the devil of it is—that only the wary, only the soiled sisters, seem to play the game of marriage with eyes open to their practical interests! To the poor profit of the best sale, and a part payment in advance! The best of women are too often either hoodwinked or roughly hurled into the arms of their secret purchasers!" "You take a gloomy view, Counselor," was Atwater's reply. The lawyer faced him with a direct question: "How many friends—parents—guardians—will reject a 'good match' where money or position is the price of the trapping of the maiden, who goes, with her lips sealed by convention, to the marriage mart? Do they not,

firmly but gently, push the girl out to a crowned self-sacrifice?"

"I am afraid it is too often the case," sadly answered Atwater, "but, no hard bought wisdom or experience seems to be handed down by the many failing cases. I have observed one curious fact, that women 'with a history'—cool adventuresses and sly feminine frauds—often utilize the lessons of their own dark past, and make what the world calls 'good wives!'"

"Precisely!" said Bashford, rising. "They play the game with unerring skill! Do not forget that every woman must battle for herself in defense of these coveted charms, the fatal heritage of Eve! I will stand by Madeleine Ware to the end, for her father's sake, and for her own sake!"

"So will I," resolutely added Atwater. And there was a mournful ring in Bashford's voice as he said: "Her marriage may make havoc of all these bright dreams of her aspiring heart! Marriage is ever an unknown quantity X in the equation of womanhood, and it intervenes to make, to break or to mar at last. What can you or I do, my friend? It would be just the same if Madeleine sat with folded hands in silken parlors! Love plays strange tricks! Passion tints the frozen lily with the blood-red tinges of the heart! Women, left alone, behind their marble walls or flimsy brown stone fronts, are not even there proof against the storms of the loosened emotions which tear the guilty bosom of the wanderer on the street. There is no safety but the final unbroken silence of Death—for we are not proof against our own selves! It is the friend within, who admits the foe without! Lord Ullin's daughter lives again in the love-lorn girl, who always throws herself blindly into the arms of the lover! It is the old game of Life, with real hearts to break, and the woman-chase of to-day shames the painted unrealities of the vivid stage; and yet, this game must be played out to the bitter end!"

Neither of the men who sought the haunting stillness of the hushed rooms above dared to dream of what

would be sweet Madeleine Ware's future when love gave a newer light to the eyes which softly shone in these waiting days, but both murmured "God bless and keep her!" as they sought rest for the coming battle of the morrow, with those harshly returning cares, which break in upon even the profoundest sorrows!

Both the men were far away, though united in heart, when, a week later, Florence Atwater tenderly led the shrouded form of the last of the Wares over the door now closing upon her happy past! There had been long hours of tender commune. There had been tender visits of adieu to each well-remembered spot! Madeleine had strayed through every silent room, and had lived over "in fond affection and recollection" the days when she had clung, a timid child, to the hand of her vanished father, as she fearfully eyed the gleaming busts of the stern Romans and the intellectual giants of olden days, gazing with unblinking eyes down from their "coigns of vantage" in the library. A question from her sorrow-shaded eyes was soon answered, as Florence threw her arms around her friend! She had noted the absence of the portraits of her loved father, and the dreamy shadow mother who had leaned so often down from heaven to kiss her sleeping child. "You will find them in your new home, Maddy, and they will welcome you on your coming!" No one dared to hasten the desolate girl in these last days of a lingering "Good-bye." It was only when she lingered alone by her parents' graves that she felt there, on that holy ground, the coming of the strength to go away! All her fond words were unanswered, as she knelt in prayer for the last time—

For the silence was unbroken,
And the only word there spoken

was the gentle summons of Florence Atwater, standing open-armed and whispering "Come!" And, so, watched over by an unseen love and tenderness shared by her two devoted champions, led by the hand of the

little Princess—Madeleine Ware, girl in the royal robes of innocence, with her brave heart buoyed up by an unflinching trust, sought peace and shelter in the far Pennsylvanian hills. There the star-eyed Minerva beckoned her onward and upward, "to the heights"—where knowledge lay still far above her, and her feet were soon resolutely set to climbing the long and steep mountain ascent. And the days and the months glided by as shadows follow the swift-gliding shallops on the stream.

The snows were drifted deeply around the leafless trees of the Hall gardens, and great clumps of bayonet icicles clung to pillared porch and quaint dormer, when a hundred or more curious listeners heard the florid description of the auctioneer who described the "very desirable property about to pass out of an old line," at the fatal fall of the hammer in his hand! Careless knots of strangers now roved over the vast interior, inspected the colonial glories of the main hall, and threaded the great supporting wings! There were resounding echoes in the empty rooms in harsh protest at the stranger foot, for the very last vestiges of the adornments of the mansion had been removed. Even the great barns and carriage houses were now empty. The sable servitors, too, had disappeared, and only the sad-eyed housekeeper, Mrs. Bradford, awaited the orders to "turn over the keys!" There was a brooding silence everywhere! The quaint old windows were closed and barred, save the few needed to admit the "necessary light" for the closing tableau of the dark deed of cowardly robbery, now a thrice-told tale! In front of the Hall a motley collection of country vehicles was huddled under the snow-laden trees. Buzzing comment was loud among the curious. For the huge granite substructure, the fortified basements of the offices, the gaunt halls, rich in old carved wainscot, the untenanted guest chambers and wondrous carved oak-
en staircase, were a revelation of the solemn grandeur of the old days! For weeks the local journals had been active in reminiscent story of the faded glories of Ware

Hall. And so there was a sigh of relief when the auctioneer, reading his formal order of court, glanced at his golden watch, and then waited for the hour of high noon. "I would like to see the interior of the rooms which are locked above," suddenly said a harsh voice, as Mr. Robert Shearer elbowed his way into the front of the ring of expectant bidders. All eyes were quickly turned upon him, for all now knew the story of his connection with the downfall of the oldest country family. A score of men and women flashed approval from indignant eyes as the auctioneer quietly said: "They are the family apartments, sir, and are closed by the orders of Mr. Jarvis." "Is that so, sir?" demanded Shearer in a bullying tone. He had secretly hung upon the path of the absent and defenseless orphaned girl like the vulgar cormorant that he was. A pushing man of affairs was Mr. Robert Shearer, and he greatly enjoyed the brutal satisfaction of this day of the public humiliation of the Wares.

"Yes, it is so!" calmly replied Mr. Jarvis, a silver-haired, quiet-faced man. "And, they will remain locked!" he decisively said. At the moment when the bidding was announced, the crowd parted right and left for a tall woman veiled in black was quietly led to the front by a gentleman who was only known to the dark-robed stranger and the vivacious looking Miss Florence Atwater, whose agitated face showed the deep crimson of a suppressed excitement. It so happened that Mr. James Renwick, of Philadelphia, had been "pressed into service" by the little Princess! She was beginning to seriously debate the possibility of changing a worn-out "No" into a most delightfully inspiring "Yes." For her band of brothers had manfully "held up the chin" of "Horatius" Renwick, who was still waiting at the bridge. "My God! It's really Madeleine herself!" murmured a tall man who lurked in a corner behind a draped curtain. He had stolen unobserved into the great apartment before the crowd had gathered, and a neatly shaven stranger of metropolitan elegance managed to lurk in front of the partly

opened curtain, so as to successfully exclude the public from that particular recess! It was indeed true! But, while a murmur of inquiry ran through the crowd the doubled crape veil of the lady was never lifted! The dancing grays outside had only just dashed up with the sleigh conveying the strangers.

The ringing notes of the auctioneer echoed a moment unanswered in the dismantled room, as the words "What am I bid, gentlemen? Will some one make an offer?" fell on the silence of the crowd like a whip-lash, cutting forever the tie that bound so long!

"Forty thousand dollars," was the stolid remark of Mr. Robert Shearer, at which bid the people eagerly craned their necks. The bank's claim was for a hundred and fifteen thousand, and only Hiram Bashford, in his retreat, growled, "The cur! He wishes to have a shortage to work on!" Bashford now pinched the arm of the human shield before him, as a stranger who had edged near the Pennsylvania party quietly said: "Fifty." It had been inspired by a glance from the eyes of the bright little woman in velvet and sables which opened that silent stranger's lips. Bashford could not easily see the man who had spoken! "Now, watch that fellow, too!" he whispered, and then his own myrmidon, in a clear voice cried, "Sixty thousand dollars!" All eyes sought the corner from whence came that one bold bid, and Miss Florence Atwater, too, was slightly paler as she laid a hand on the arm of the man beside her. The auctioneer, with eager, hawk-like eyes, towered above them. "Do I hear any other bids?" he ominously said. "Seventy thousand" came out in a jerky voice from Miss Florence's secret agent, who ruefully muttered, "Heavens, what a pinch!" The lady of Castle Atwater was taking no chances on this first field day of her life! "It's so glorious to have money!" was her wild internal sigh of triumph, as the expectant auctioneer now turned his eye toward Shearer, whose face was already crimsoned. He had caught a clear view of Miss Atwater's countenance, and his brow was black as he defiantly growled "Eighty thou-

sand!" The hum of astonishment in many-keyed voices was heard, and only squelched by the vigorous rapping of the fateful hammer. "Order! Gentlemen! No unseemly confusion! You can all have a chance to bid!" was the warning cry. But the hum began to be a chorus as the corner sentinel's voice rang out, "Ninety thousand!" "Now, that's something like a bid!" proudly cried the happy auctioneer, mindful of his commission. People gazed blankly at each other as the property was held to be doomed to a sacrifice. Shearer was now nervously consulting some private memoranda. He pushed his way boldly up to the block—notebook in hand—

All scattered backward as he came—
For, all knew Bertram Risingham.

"Ninety thousand I am bid! Do I hear another offer?" A death-like silence followed, for all the listeners now knew there was a bitter duel on! The hidden foes were already mustering their last battalions! Bashford longed to leap out from his concealment and scatter the crowd of money changers from this temple of tenderest memories. He grasped the hand of his human fortification, and then whispered in the man's ear. While Miss Florry Atwater was pressing a daintily gloved hand upon her own bounding heart, "Quick! Quick!" she whispered to her own agent, and then her hand stole back strangely into Mr. James Renwick's protecting palm! For Robert Shearer, with a proud sweep of his book, had called out in a loud voice—"One hundred and twenty thousand dollars!" The hammer fell twice before the astonished man watching Miss Atwater's eye could gasp, "Twenty-five!" Shearer turned and then whispered a warning word to the auctioneer. "I warn you that ten per cent of the purchase price must be deposited forthwith, gentlemen!" cried the excited hammer-wielder. There was no answer from the crowd, until the pale, shaven stranger left his corner and whispered a word to the stately

woman who stood there silent in her sweeping crape veil. "One hundred and forty thousand dollars!" calmly remarked the unknown man, whom all eyes had followed in his forward movement. There was a start of the excited crowd for the door, as Robert Shearer thundered out of the room, with his hat jammed down over his eyes. The ivory hammer had fallen three times before Counselor Bashford thankfully ejaculated: "That settles the damned scoundrel forever!"

He then strode out boldly from his concealment, as the auctioneer, with a fierce glance and in a ringing tone demanded, "Bidder's name? Step up now and make your deposit!" "John Smith," jovially answered the great advocate, as he elbowed his way to the front with a bulky green package in his hand. He paused as a faint cry reached him, and leaping forward, he sprang to the side of Miss Florence Atwater, who now was crying as if her heart would break. "I have lost it—lost it!" she feebly moaned, as she gazed at Bashford's triumphant face.

"You dear little witch! Have I been bidding against you?" cried Bashford, dropping his package on the floor. For the tall Niobe in black swayed uneasily, and it was on Hiram's breast that her head came fluttering down in the deep swoon of a sudden deliverancy from the agency of shame. "Send them all out!" cried Bashford, in a ringing voice. "This is my house, and"—his utterance was choked by a sudden sob—"your home, your own home again, Madeleine, if you will have it so!" Hiram Bashford never forgot the light beaming from Florence Atwater's eyes, as she stood gazing at James Renwick, who had deftly picked up Bashford's forgotten package of money. The happy lawyer cared not for its whereabouts, for the little Pennsylvanian, too, suddenly forgot her tears and succeeded in kissing the grave-faced lawyer, to the evident envy of the now enlightened Renwick and the astonishment of the few lingerers.

"You dearest of men!" she cried. "Why did you not tell us you were going to beat all that dreadful man's

schemes? Oh! You were so noble! It was magnificent—yes, magnificent!”

Mrs. Bradford had stolen up to the side of the girl whom she had nursed in infancy. Hiram Bashford was somewhat dazed by the sudden accolade which rewarded his financial daring. “I think,” he said, “Mrs. Bradford can give us a little home dinner!” He turned to Florence Atwater, whose eyes were now fixed on him in a speechless tenderness. For she saw at last the watchful fidelity and delicate generosity of the man who would guard the orphan’s name from even an insinuation. “Take Madeleine up to her own room, Miss Florence!” he simply said. “We are all at home here—once more—all but Philip!” he murmured, as he strode up and handed the delighted auctioneer twenty-eight crisp five hundred dollar notes.

“Mr. Jarvis will attend to the deeds and papers!” gravely remarked “Mr. John Smith,” “and I’ll call tomorrow and give you my thanks if you’ll put every one of these people off these premises at once.” The joyous auctioneer flew away to execute the behest, for his deeds of “commission” on this happy day covered many deeds of “omission,” and went up into several thousands. Before the little circle gathered in the domain of the happiness crazed Mrs. Bradford, for a pretense of a dinner—Hiram Bashford left the two women alone to the sweet sanctity of their happy trance. He stole out through the leafless wood paths to where Philip Ware rested under the snow, and with uncovered head he whispered, “Philip! Philip! I stood by your Madeleine today!” and then he came slowly back with a strange brightness on his rugged face!

CHAPTER IV.

A MODERN PORTIA.

It was with a bronzed face and a jocund air of breezy health that the senior partner of the great firm of Bashford, Blake and Bodley, presided over a little "war council" in their legal wigwam, to open the season of 1891-92. It was in the closing days of September. Bodley had dragged his reluctant spouse home from the delights of glittering Homburg, and her annual assaults upon Worth and the Bon Marché. He was now prepared to put his galled shoulders to the wheel to accumulate funds for the next "personally conducted" raid upon the "effete monarchies!" Blake was invincible in a new repertoire of fish stories, astounding in their Munchausen flights. Hiram Bashford, having pulled the kinks out of Pacific Mail, had used his vacation to run over one or two Western lines of nerveless railways, in their care, peeped at pipe line interests, inspected several coal and iron concerns, and even conferred with some of their Western clients engaged in the poetic tasks of "pig assassination," and other genial tricks peculiar to those Chicago men who gallop the beasts of the field into their golgothas, soon to emerge neatly canned, labeled and boxed, "all on Chicago principles!" The various underlings of the legal hive had given up "cutting the office," and dreamed now sadly of their vanished "summer girls" as the nimble pen sped over the crackling folios. Already the saucy-eyed detachment of women typewriters were noisily clinking and clacking away in the office at their infernal instruments of torture.

Mr. Nathaniel Withers, the snake of this dangerous Eden, daily contemplated suicide or resignation, as the logical result of the work of these "smart women." Said the mournful Withers: "They can jam more inaccuracies into the same space than any other gang of key-tappers this side of Hades!"

"Is there anything special, gentlemen?" carelessly asked the "chief," after two hours spent in strategically laying out the varied work of the three commanders. It had always been the custom of the house to allow Bashford unlimited "rope" in the "long haul" of the dragging load. Blake, anxious to nail some of his friends at the Lawyers' Club with his very best selection of appalling "fish tales," yawned as he looked at the hands of the clock now nearing half past twelve. He passed the query in silence.

"Withers tells me," said Bodley, in a rasping voice, "that he must have help. Our business is increasing rapidly. The detail is vast," somewhat proudly said the pale-faced man, who was socially only a traveling trunk agent for his expensive wife. "We have accommodation enough, our clerical force is good, but our students are practically useless, and Withers must have more intelligent aid in getting up our cases." It was a long oration for Bodley, who was accustomed to be snuffed out by his imperative wife. He was only a man standing up in court, when beaming upon a jury, with his professionally benign grin, redolent of the beatitudes, or else talking to the left eyelid of a drowsy judge. "What's your plan?" bluntly demanded Bashford, flourishing a paper cutter. It awoke Blake from a pleasant day dream in which he stood once more by the blackened pools of the McCloud River. He was now only a "fisher of men" as he genially murmured, "Know a fellow, good lawyer, fellow about thirty, Seaton Bennett, Columbia College man, smart, rattling worker, and has a big pull with Tammany. You know what that means." The seniors nodded with a gleam of approval.

"He wants to come in with a strong firm," resumed Blake. "He's a good fellow, a rattling good lawyer. I've been out fishing with him—man you would like." Blake's fingers twitched as if he were landing Seaton Bennett, a plump young trout, into a legal pool wherein the three great fish gravely swam and desported themselves with such modest dignity "as the law allows."

"He could bring us a good deal of business," wandered on Blake's catchy description. "Croker may shove him into Congress some day. He's a very handy chap. I think he's reliable." There was a faint shade of doubt suggesting a lack of ultimate confidence.

"I would not want his name to go at once into the firm," cautiously said Bodley, mindful of the "next annual outing" of his wife, who was a veritable money-eater. "Oh, he would be satisfied with a good round salary and a five per cent commission on the year's profits," calmly said Blake. "He wants to get downtown standing so as to work back at Tammany Hall."

Bashford threw up his head with a snort. "Does he drink and hang around the Hoffman House?" The senior feared to see a man with a brazen jaw, a fierce, empurpled mustache and a large diamond horseshoe pin. Blake laughed. "Oh, he's a very nice fellow. Not that sort. Just keenly ambitious and a man who is bound to get on. He's a club man, and very good form. I would not bring any 'heeler' into our circle here."

"Of course not," smoothly said Bodley, pouring on a sample of that "court-room oil" with which he usually soothed the refractory witness. "Is—is he married?" Bashford smiled grimly. He well knew that Mrs. Bodley aspired to wear the ermine, for what the breezy Texan would call "the whole outfit." That resplendent woman had eclipsed her patient husband and she also shone in the borrowed light of the two unmarried partners. Mrs. Bodley aspired to do the whole "Egeria business" for one of the heaviest legal machines slowly rumbling along in New York. Her occasional visits, when she rustled in pride through the caverned recesses of the William Street fortress, filled the pert typewriters with smouldering envy, and simply "paralyzed" the ambitious students who lurked around the library and filled its cosy corners not sacred to copying presses or dictionary racks. These feeble, callow youths, whose pale cheeks spoke of the cigarette craze and the "cork room" at Koster and Bials, were patterns of dress and

amiable uselessness. Crowded in by various important families, where tin boxes adorned the noble row gleaming on the walls, with yellow labels, these young men were all elegant stipendiary dependents on their relatives. By some occult process they were supposed to imbibe "law" in the highly charged atmosphere of this intellectual "pneumatic caisson." They were the very despair of Withers, who feared to bully them too much, and they notably interfered with the head clerk's forlorn hope pursuit of the fair typewriters in the brief hour allotted to the mid-day consumption of doughnuts, caramels and Hudnut's strawberry cream soda.

"Mr. Bennett is not married," wearily said Blake, as he reached for his hat and cane. "Shall I bring him down to see you?" The two seniors looked at each other and nodded their assent. Blake was well into the tale of the entrapment of a twelve pound trout with an eight ounce rod, at the Lawyers' Club, before Bashford and Bodley finally closed a serious conversation they had drifted into. There was some slight shadow of a first estrangement between them as they coldly separated, and Hiram Bashford stumped away into his private office, closing the door with a thundering bang. Mr. Nathaniel Withers, sly and cat-like, jumped at the sound as he received the snappish orders of the petulant Bodley. "The chiefs have been rowing each other," he gleefully thought, with the usual insinuation of a mean mind. It had come about in this wise. When Blake departed, Bashford, lighting a cigar, said calmly: "There is something I should have mentioned before, Bodley. I will let you decide as to bringing in this young man Bennett. It might be a very good idea. Scan his qualifications closely. We cannot afford to make mistakes in our practice, you know."

Bodley was delighted at the semi-confidential tone of this declaration, as it gave him a newer hold on the absent fisherman. He was, however, astonished when Bashford earnestly said: "I wish you to be suited and use this new man as your own special aide-de-camp. You are always overworked. I am going to put a

young lady in here as a special assistant to the librarian, and also to give her an opportunity to learn practice."

"A woman lawyer!" cried Bodley, as his face at once stiffened into a sour discontent. Bashford went on, with measured gravity. "Yes, a woman lawyer. She is the only daughter of my old friend, Judge Philip Ware, who died last year. She studied for two years in his office and has just finished the two years' course at Lehigh brilliantly, in one year." Bodley arose and then paced the room in a silent mutiny, the first of the long partnership. Henpecked and driven about at home, he was a worm that turned now in sheer affright. "Is she really competent? Does she know anything of law?" he doubtfully demanded. "She has passed a splendid examination and was admitted with flying colors," innocently rejoined the chief. He was only thinking of his dear dead classmate. "Why! Jarvis, of Wilmington, tells me that she really worked up all of Ware's practice in the last two years of his life. I've been with her for a month this summer, and I find that she certainly knows as much as any one of our second grade men here."

"I suppose she is young and good looking?" said Bodley, with a strange blindness to the peace of the legal realm. Hiram Bashford sprang up, and then his eyes blazed fiercely, but he only quietly replied, in an altered tone, "I will give Miss Ware an office adjoining mine, and busy her in the special affairs under my charge. You can consider her as my own personal employe. See that no one bothers her. I'll not permit it." The great-hearted counselor had seen the glance of slurring malignity which escaped the usual retention of the prudent "second fiddle of this legal orchestra." Bodley walked silently to the door, defeated and humbled. He turned at the threshold. "And, about this man Seaton Bennett?" "I am not in the habit of changing my mind every ten minutes, Mr. Bodley," sharply said the chief. "Do what you will in that matter, and let my side of the house alone."

When Bodley had hastily gained the refuge of his

own room he then rang for Withers and rasped him down a bit. Then, wandering out, he nursed a growing personal grievance all the way down the fifteen storied elevator shaft. It was the first time that he had been called "Mr. Bodley." He shivered with fear as he thought of the dire results of the angered Bashford leaving the firm. It would then be "Hamlet" with no "Prince of Denmark." "I see trouble ahead," he moaned, as he humbled himself with a scanty lunch of pie and coffee. For he had come out decidedly second best in the tilt and he even feared to break in on Blake's best fish story at the cosy Lawyers' Club, where that imaginative sportsman was now "trying it on a dog."

Counselor Bashford sat down and drove his pen deeply into the firm ivory paper he affected, as he inscribed a few meaning lines, addressed

"For

"Miss Madeleine Ware, in care of Mrs. James Renwick, Castle Atwater, Williamsport, Penn."

The brief injunction, "Come on to New York at once. Telegraph and I will meet you," was his imperative answer to the mutiny of Bodley. The chief affixed a seal, with a vigorous jab at the wax, and then hurled the letter down the mail chute himself. He slowly possessed himself of top-coat, hat and cane, and passed Head Clerk Withers with a curt remark: "I'll be away all day. Send anything of importance to the house." Single-minded in his devotion to his sacred trust, he had not noticed the peculiar raising of Bodley's eyebrows when he had said, "I have been with her a month this summer." It was just as well, for the fate of the firm had trembled on the very ragged edge. It was only in his own library, far away uptown, that he finally recovered his shaken equanimity. He glanced carelessly around the substantial splendors of his own vast home. For the first time the man who had weakened upon the question of "the intellectual fitness of woman in the future" saw the chilling clouds blowing over the fair and upward pathway of his beloved *protégée*. "If I could only have her here, and give

to her the dignity and protection of my own home." He caught a glimpse of his rugged world-worn face and iron gray mane in the pier glass as he sat alone at luncheon. "I am old enough to be her father," he sighed. But the fatal "qu'en dira t' on" had faced him first in his partner Bodley's imperceptible sneer. Though he had not resented it to the full, it had really cut him to the quick. "Poor darling. I am powerless to protect her, but she shall not want. By God!" He sprang up as he saw at last a lane of light, a new rift in the clouds. "I'll leave the old Hall to her, and she can live there and practice at Wilmington after I am off the course." He lit a cigar and, seating himself at his writing table, addressed an envelope to Mrs. James Renwick and another to Mrs. Martha Van Cortlandt, of Madison Avenue. "I must prepare for Maddy's arrival," he mused. When he had dispatched these letters he carefully examined a series of envelopes endorsed "Estate of Ware vs. Shearer." It had been with a fiendish delight that he had thrust the legal javelins of attack into the now thoroughly frightened Robert Shearer. When the bank's notes had all been paid in full some lingering outside assets had settled the other slender claims against the dead scholar's estate. The Ware property was, in fact, more than self-sustaining from its broad acreage, and the resolute orphan had forced him to withdraw the \$25,000 surplus of his over-bidding. "Hold the Hall. I may live to earn it back. Who knows?" the brave girl had answered, accepting only the counsel and god-speed of her protector. "Well, then, Lady Mine," said Bashford, "I will now go after Mr. Robert Shearer for fraud and misrepresentation, and see if you cannot buy your own home again, with your own money." On this particular September afternoon Bashford smiled grimly as he read a letter from "Jarvis & Thorne," forwarding a timid offer of compromise from the frightened usurer. "Ha! Wants to compromise, does he?" growled Bashford, and he sounded a ringing peal upon his bell. "Be sure you mail that with care, Anderson,"

he said, as he gave his man a letter, with the briefest injunctions to the local attorneys to refuse all such offers. "Push the case on for trial as soon as you can. I'll come down and try it myself," were the words which later carried dismay to the pudgy hero of the "Kaolin Company" deal. Mr. Robert Shearer had lived to find the dead man strike back at him from the tomb, for all just men secretly avoided him, and his brutal behavior on the day of the auction had been noised far abroad. In the long year of her probation at Lehigh University Madeleine Ware's noble womanly face gave no sign of sorrows past, of vain regrets for "lost position" in the aristocratic old county. Her lips were sealed, and Robert Shearer meanly rejoiced at the woman's high-minded pride. It saved him trouble. Wrapped up in the love of her Ogontz classmate, shielded by Bashford, and fondly ministered to by Florence Atwater's kindly brothers, the way had been made smooth for the beautiful orphan, who studied with all the ardor of her sinless ambitions. It was only in that bright vacation month, when Counselor Bashford came to Castle Atwater, that the sealed doors of her heart were reopened again to life and love. The president of the University had at last given her the sealed diploma she coveted, and her face lit up, for the first time, when the little Pennsylvanian princess gathered Mr. James Renwick into her fold, and became the delighted recipient of brother Hugh's promised diamond necklace. There was a great mustering of the clans of Atwater and Renwick. From their mountain eyries, lit up with coke ovens and flaming forges, from hills braided with their railroads and founded upon their patrimonial iron and coal beds, the Atwaters came gladly to the wedding feast. A pert scion of the line, escaping from his shipyard, jovially remarked to Hugh, the stalwart chief of the clan, "I am sorry for Jimmy Renwick. Such a dance Florence will lead him." Hugh snubbed the young caviller with the remark, "Go thou and do likewise. Get married and be sensible. Only, you'll never find a girl like our Flossie."

Mr. James Renwick stood up like a man and submitted meekly to the yoke of matrimony. He stole a timid glance at the flashing-eyed Princess of Mischief standing beside him in her shimmering silks and wondrous bridal veil as she demurely promised "to love, honor and obey." Renwick enjoyed the scepter for one single night of maddening bewilderment. He resigned the truncheon of command on the very morrow to the little lady, who forthwith charmingly ignored the third clause of the "triple-headed contract." But, "it was merry in hall." Counselor Bashford footed it deftly at the feast and was the subject of much complimentary notice in the obsequious society journals, who were duly "convulsed with the event." Madeleine Ware threw her arms around the happy little bride in a transport of tender love when she found her splendid rooms had been refitted with all the choicest spoil of her dear old home upon the Delaware. "You must thank Jimmy," lovingly said Mrs. Renwick. "It was his idea."

James Renwick was really a man of mark, despite the hampering of the golden spoon. It is true that he was a gilded youth, a curled darling of the Philadelphia City Troop, a light of Coaching clubs and Polo banditti, a staunch yachtsman, and very deft with rod, gun and oar. But a manly light gleamed from the blue eyes of the big, bearded, blonde fellow who had capitulated to the dark-eyed fairy, whom he had served his seven long years for. The course of true love, for once, did run remarkably smooth, and it was while the young married fugitives were away in the "lune de miel" that Mrs. Martha Van Cortlandt came on from New York to matronize the succession of festivities which delighted the gathered clans. Madeleine Ware learned of the thoughtful devotion of the absent lovers when her own home nest in great New York was arranged by the cheery Knickerbocker widow, one of the Renwick clan. "You shall not be a stranger within the gates," said the newcomer. And, in the too quickly flitting days of Bashford's vacation, wandering in the beautiful Pennsylvanian hills, the modern Portia poured out her

heart to the man who "had weakened," only to rise above his olden self in a ten-fold strength of faith in the possibilities of this splendid womanhood.

The snows of Christmas week were wreathing the stately mansions of the avenue with fleecy mantles of glistening silver, and the sound of jingling bells was merry in the park, as Counselor Hiram Bashford sped along behind his grays in earnest converse with Mrs. Martha Van Cortlandt. Far away down town the closed offices echoed to no rustling folios, and the brisk winds whistled coldly past the great office buildings. The breezy blasts from the Mohawk Valley, with a touch of Canadian chill, stirred the tatters of the poor, tramping down the muddied crystal harvest, which to Hester Street meant only a keener edge to the sharpness of their daily miseries. Not a single poor "rounder" staggering toward the corner gin shop, in the purlieus where Kris Kringle never comes, not a haggard-eyed arab slinking into a columned doorway to escape the harsh policeman, was haunted with bitterer cares than the great lawyer and his companion on this sleighing dash.

It had been no ordinary vacation run which had taken beautiful Madeleine Ware far away to the luxurious interior of Castle Atwater. Genial Hugh Atwater himself had brought on his own bright-eyed Pennsylvanian life partner to convey Madeleine away "for a run." The kindly suggestion of Mrs. James Renwick, now straying "by the unfamiliar Arno," far beyond the seas, was reinforced by several private letters from the chief. "Try to draw her out, to gain her confidence, to find out what may be done to ease her mental pre-occupation, Hugh," was Bashford's last prayer. "This girl is driving herself straight onward in a stoical self-devotion to a profession, where, I fear, she will pluck but barren honors at last. God bless the child. It is a case of self-immolation as regards the head, of a continued strain unrelieved by meed or laurel; as regards the heart, of simply 'suspended animation.'" The generous Pennsylvanian's brow was clouded. "I am too

clumsy fingered to handle the delicate crystal of her nature," he sadly said. "I'll put the little woman on to draw her out. By the crackling back log and under the mistletoe, she may warm up to a bit of real womanly confidence. That's all I can do. See here, Bashford, is the legal career going to be a failure? Is Madeleine unhappy?"

Hiram drew a great breath as he said: "It is going to be a cruel sacrifice—a sacrifice of as sweet a woman as God ever made. You see, Hugh," he reluctantly said, "the practical objections to the plan are, as usual, the more vulgar, unforeseen details which are passed over, always, in any abstract consideration of right and wrong. I have been educated to this by watching the girl, 'a stranger within the gates,' in these last five months. She labors under the fearful handicap of a pure womanhood, in the indiscriminate struggle of life. It's no use. Practical life is a rough and tumble, not a courtly fence of rapiers. Now, if Madeleine were only one of the 'getting on' sort. If she were only unscrupulous, pushing, brazen, unsexed, or slyly corrupt, she could be a public standard bearer, and have her hardened face the bright attraction of a dozen daily journals. Make her happy, God bless her, while with you, Hugh. I must try some way to lighten her load, to brighten her onward way." He paused in deep dejection, and Hugh Atwater then anxiously asked: "Does she complain? Is she breaking down?" He dimly guessed the nature of some of the unforeseen frictional influences.

"She would die at the stake before she would abandon the path carved out by her high convictions. I only wish to God she would throw it up. For I can now see, Hugh, that I cannot fight this grim battle for her, nor even shield her in the hurly-burly of a great Babylon. There's no way that a man can do it—a man in my position." The lawyer's voice was sad enough.

Counselor Bashford had secretly devoted his Christmas week to a series of conferences with Mrs. Martha Van Cortlandt as to the reserved inner heart life of

the stately neophyte. There had been long hours of serious converse and an unreserved interchange of views. The widowed society woman knew every detail of the office life of the absent girl. Bashford told of his cautious fencing off every intrusion, of the mingled animosity and impertinence of the attendants, the sly approaches of the visiting younger members of the profession, and the ill-concealed aversion of his partners, Blake and Bodley, to this modern Portia. "There seems to be an undertone carrying her out beyond the life line, all the while," remarked Bashford, as they sped along through the park. "I fancied when Madeleine Ware came to our office that my own frank statement of our acquaintance, that my years and my lifelong friendship for her father, would silence the idle tongue of cavil. 'Ah, my friend, I find that I can do so little for her. My protection is a protection which does not protect. There is an interrogation in every eye. Even the details of her coming and going are daily experiences of covert insult. If she walked, I presume she would be stalked like a timid deer. If I sent her down in a coupé, it would be only a ridiculous assumption, and then the tongue of scandal would wag. In all these goings and comings she is 'under fire,' and if I accompanied her habitually I might as well proclaim her social ruin." He groaned in his powerlessness. "It seems, in some strange way, that a woman seeking an individual career is outside of all friendly lines of sex or station, and she battles in the open alone. There is a steady, unseen current always setting dead against her."

"And is Madeleine destined to be a failure as a lawyer?" anxiously queried the widow, heart and soul in sympathy now. It all seemed so unfair, so cruel!

"She can always be of the greatest value as an assistant," carefully stated Bashford. "Her keen brain, her splendid knowledge, her intuitive perception of the true current of the law is wonderful, but," he gloomily added, "she cannot have the needful scope for individual action, or a chance to command the

proper respect due her as a qualified member of the bar. She is neither 'a freak nor a fraud,' and I am ashamed to say the pressure of the men who are thrown in her professional company is exerted to force her to go either forward or back. It is the old thing, Mrs. Van Cortlandt. It is the gulf of sex which divides her from her yoke fellows. If men would only adopt a fair-play system with women they could soon winnow out the wheat from the chaff. Now, here is the strange paradox. The woman who only asks to be let alone will never be let alone, by the hard-hearted men who crowd in upon her dignified reserve. By heavens, there is but one man in our office who seems to know how to treat a woman of heart, brain and soul. Now, there's this young fellow Bennett. He is coming into a private association with us for five years, on the first of next January. He has all the manners of a gentleman and the fine discrimination. I have watched him narrowly in the few months of his 'private trial.' He has never even raised his eyes toward her, and, good, sound lawyer as he is, he tells me she is more effective to-day than any of his fellows of the younger bar."

"You like this Seaton Bennett, then?" quietly said the widow, with a queer twinkle of her eyes.

"Bodley tells me that he fills the bill wonderfully well," answered Bashford, "and the cases he has got up for me are certainly splendidly prepared. By the way, has he ever called here?"

"Only to leave formal cards on Miss Ware and myself," said Mrs. Van Cortlandt.

"He is wrapped up in political matters in his leisure. He has the congressional 'bee in his bonnet,'" absently said Bashford. "And he is a man who will get there, as they say, every time." Recalling himself, the great lawyer fixed his eyes on Mrs. Van Cortlandt, with a masterful glance. "Tell me of her home life with you. Does she amuse herself? Does she go out? Has she made any social friends? I feel that I must depend upon you, largely, in this, of course. If Mrs. Renwick were only near us, then Madeleine's hours of idleness

would be a happy dream. But we cannot hold New York courts on the lawns of Castle Atwater, and our Madeleine does not want coddling—she only craves for 'fair play.'"

"Ah, that is just it," said the widow cautiously. "There seems to be no limit to Madeleine's ambition, goaded on by her restless mind, and no set bounds to her silent pride. She cannot see or admit her changed position."

"What changed position?" abruptly said Bashford.

"Ah, my dear friend," sighed the Knickerbocker dame, "the laws of society are more rigid than all the code of your storied Medes and Persians. There is always the fatal gap between the bread-winner and the butterfly. The very women doomed to pass over to the ranks of the toilers themselves at last are the very bitterest in upholding woman's own heartless creed. Madeleine Ware, the daughter of the master of the old Hall, the heiress of ripened colonial glories, the inheritress of a famous social rank, is dead—dead forever to the callous world. As Madeleine Ware, the adventuress, a veiled anonyma, she might even yet hover 'on the fringe,' but, as Miss Ware, the practical young lawyer, she is tabooed by all the silly women who rule the seething society around her. You know that I sit in state, poor as the world goes, but with folded hands. I am supposed to be true to all the traditions of my race, to the obligations of the social rank I have always held. I am tacitly held up as being true to the necessary code of Fashion. I have tried to interest many women in Madeleine. There is a listlessness in regard to her, which soon chills into neglect, and ends in aversion, as the icy wall of Madeleine's pride does not warm these feebly extended hands. It saddens me to know that you are not satisfied with her professional prospects, for, frankly, the social gates, one by one, are closing on her. She will soon be only a stranger within the gates." Mrs. Van Cortlandt sighed. "You, my friend, as head of a great professional system, know not the half of the daily happen-

ings around you. Those who would creep on Madeleine's semi-retirement under your wing are not likely to let you know of their tactics. I have seen her lately growing graver, paler, thinner, day by day, and I am assured that only the womanly sorrow which seals her lips has hidden from me the jar and fret of her false position, 'down town,' as you would say. In my own sphere I can convey her a bit from shore, but on the summer sea of New York society she is now powerless, motionless, rudderless, a noble castaway, a mere derelict, because, forsooth, she works."

"And is there no help, no practical way out?" groaned Bashford. "Must she be smothered in her bright youth for want of the free exercise of her God-given talent? Must she be trodden down under the feet of the unforgiving prosperous sisters who have not known sorrow?"

"There is but one way," the widow slowly said. "A fortunate marriage might relieve her from this false position. Say what you will, it is a false position. It is a sacrifice for her to play the pioneer in a profession which is, as yet, virtually closed to women. It is a cruel fate that dooms her to obscurity socially. Now, Judge Bashford," the warm-hearted woman said, "take away your noble friendship, my social support, the home welcome she owes to dear Florrie. Put her friendless fighting against the world, what would be the end of the unequal struggle? Can you not see what fills the morgue, the mad house, the haunts where the crimson flag of sin waves? For there is a period to a woman's resistance, there are flood tides of emotion, there are lonely hours, despondent moods and all the sad accidents of sickness and poverty. This it is that makes marriage, a marriage with any man, if a fortunate one, as the world judges, a sheet anchor against drifting on certain yawning reefs. Now, Madeleine's unawakened heart is spellbound in this fever of the brain. You see only the strength and fervor of her mental ardor. Have you ever dreamed that the pent-up tides of that lonely heart may break away? God help

her. In the hour when she learns to love, it will be to her either the gateway of Paradise or else the gloomy entrance to the dark gulf. For we cannot fight the battles of her lonely life for her. She alone is on guard before the silent temple of her closed heart. And even sentinels sleep sometimes, sleep on post," the widow mused.

"You then think that a final marriage is the safest refuge for her," said the lawyer in a strained voice.

"Since you admit her probable failure in the profession of her choice, it is the only one," frankly said the New York duenna. "If Mrs. Renwick were at home I should urge her to win Madeleine at once back into her own social circle and there, in the reflected golden gleam of the Atwater millions, Madeleine could then marry on equal terms. It would be far better than this false position, this foreordained defeat. You practically admit that you can do nothing for her; that you cannot change the way of the legal world any more than I can put heart or consideration into the hollow-headed people who are paddling along here, in the swim."

"But, she would not have fought her fight to the finish in this flank movement, the easy retirement of marriage," mused Bashford.

"God help her if she ever does," solemnly said the widow. "She is too pure for the soiled channels of a vulgar daily life, too innocent for coquetry, too fond for idle scorning." The woman's heart swelled as she said: "I wish to God that I knew now a good man who would marry her and so break this deadlock."

They were nearing the great city, where the myriad lights began to flash out in the splendid halls of "Easy Street," or on the watch towers of sin; gleaming out from the windows of happy homes, and flickering feebly from these casements, where the wolf haunted the rickety door.

"I think that I know a man who would make her a good husband," said Bashford, speaking with an almost childish simplicity. And the widow dropped

er eyes in silence as the evening church bells rang out on the frosty air.

"I think I know him, too," she thought, with a pride in that honest tenderness which would "bridge the intervening years," to make the way smooth for the tired feet bruised on the rough stones of the flinty New York streets.

While Counselor Bashford was seated alone that night before his library fire, dreaming dreams which had never come to him before this day, near him, in a corner of the Manhattan Club, Mr. Seaton Bennett was carefully summing up the record of the dying year. He was neatly, even punctiliously, dressed and he had dined with that measured ceremony which he always respected. His carefully graduated salutations indicated the "modus vivendi" of his greatly improved position. A cat-like man daintily treading the stairway of life and looking behind, as well as forward, in planting each onward footstep. "Sort of fellow you never get on with," was the secret verdict of many of his club comrades, as well as the legal profession. It was true that the young man "moved in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform." With an easy stride, he had gone through college, had soon laid hold upon a fair practice, had been recognized as a man of inherent strength and future promise, and as one who kept his counsel and that of others. He "showed up" fairly at the various places where the "lime lights" were thrown on him, and, although without intimates, "was already considered" to have a good standing. Seated at the solitaire table, gazing at the faint blue wreaths of his cigar, he was the peer of any there—a well-knit, solidly put-up man of the very neatest social and physical grooming. His broad, fair brow, firm gray eyes, strong nose and sweeping mustache accentuated a face whose strong jaws were relieved by the softness of his full red lips and rounded chin. Sure of foot, keen of eye, rounded of muscle, and with a steady, cat-like gait, all his characteristics were proofs of the treasured vitality of his golden younger prime. In court, never sweeping

on in eloquence, but strong-measured and able, he passed for his full "hall mark" and apparent weight without a single question. The "clincher" of his formal entry into the great firm of Blashford, Blake and Bodley had quickly carried him one step from the General Committee of Tammany toward the inner circles of that "close corporation." Said a great leader, when his name came up, "He's worth a good deal down town, it seems. He's then worth just as much to us, up-town. Let him in. We'll find a future use for him." And so, all in all, the young man was a figure of growing interest to those around him, who carefully noted his steady upward way. Bennett always "hunted alone," and his family Lares and Penates were supposed to be located somewhere in Western New York. His bright, hard, alert face was familiar at race course and meet, on the decks of yachts and in the foyer, but if he had "intimates," they, so far, had not materialized. A decorously kept set of bachelor apartments had been his well known headquarters in the five years wherein he had worked up a fair personal practice. And now he had "caught on." Neither a cynic, nor a reckless pleasure lover, his self-contained countenance was prominent in the vast overflowing human hive swarming from Philadelphia to Montauk Point and from the Battery to Albany.

There was a greenish gleam in his gray eyes an hour later as he turned away in disappointment from Mrs. Martha Van Cortlandt's door. "Out of town," he mused. "Gone to the country. I can wait," he muttered as he lit a cigar, and then calmly debated the attractions of the various theaters. "Yes, I can wait." And, as he sprang into the coupé, he murmured, "If that old meddler Bashford were only out of the way, if he would 'go off the hooks,' I would get a grade in promotion and so, be nearer to her." Mr. Seaton Bennett was perfectly aware that the heedless Blake already liked to shirk his own work on the willing shoulders of the man whom he had brought in, and even Bodley, fussy and vain, was already a captive to

Bennett's obsequious arts. For the young lawyer had a little private scheme of his own.

"I must split those fellows up," he mused, "and perhaps this girl will fall my way in the wreck." For the aspiring young lawyer had certain little castles in Spain. Schemes which already haunted his dreaming hours, and the Greek-browed girl, happy under the mistletoe far away that night in Castle Atwater, had no second sight to pierce the mantle of Seaton Bennett's decorous reserve. But, his tiger heart had marked the defenseless girl down as a tender bit of prey.

The new year had come in with a clang of jangling chimes and much conventional welcome. The slow mills of the legal gods ground away again, and New York society went feverishly on in glittering robes of pride to the sham penitence of the Lenten season, the rest decreed in Vanity Fair for gathering up the personal and pecuniary forces, only to begin all over again. Madeleine Ware was again the grave-browed daughter of the law, and steadily moved on in her self-appointed orbit with no sign of weariness and without a single gleam of happy light in the lovely steadfast eyes. Once or twice the maiden had dropped her eyes in a sudden confusion, as Bashford communed with her in her office room. She had resolutely put away, from day to day, the conviction that it was her only safe retreat. She knew not of the confidences of her great mentor with the Knickerbocker widow. She was ignorant of the varied interviews in which Hugh Atwater and Bashford debated the future of their beloved modern Portia. There was a little packet of foreign letters in the counselor's private safe which breathed the spirit of dual loving kindness actuating those brilliant American exiles, Mr. and Mrs. James Renwick. It was when the leaves were nodding in the park, under the warming flush of the delicate spring sunshine, that the girl, wounded in her heart of hearts, closed the curtains of her home refuge against even Mrs. Van Cortlandt. The secret of those dark hours was never known to the grave-faced couple who lingered

in a last council below in the faded glories of the Van Cortlandt drawing rooms. It was in the silent darkness of the night, thrilled with the haunting memories of dear and vanished faces, that the wounded heart wailed out invoking that gracious shadow father of the happy past.

"Ah! My God! This it is to be a woman. To suffer and be silent. To walk the path alone. The agony of four cramped walls. The petty theater of a single lonely room." And the words, "Father, I cannot bear it" were the last appeals wafted far beyond the earthly confines of the bruised soul. But there came to her soon an incident which stirred the slumbering heart of the girl to its unfathomed depths of tenderness.

When, in the dull inertia of her slow recovery, Madeleine Ware faced the man who had unwillingly opened to her the way to these later trials, she knew the very burden of his thoughts before he had even finished his tender words. Bashford had taken her trembling hands and softly said: "Madeleine, I have not spoken until you might be again mistress of yourself. My poor child. My poor darling," he softly pleaded, "there is one way, only one way, to give you peace, to shelter your dear head. It has cost me hours of self-examination to see the light." He threw up his head in a noble defiance to the mongrel hounds upon her track. "Let me give you my name, the shelter of my home—your former home—the old Hall waits for you. Be my wife. I can defend you then. If not Love's golden dream, you will have peace, happiness, and you shall do as you will. And then, and there, safe now and in the future, harm shall not come to you." He kissed her trembling hands, for she had risen and stood before his rugged face, transfigured in tenderness, with softly shining eyes.

"You would sacrifice yourself for me, to shield and protect me," she slowly said, her voice soft as the falling dews of the night. "It cannot be." She bent her stately head, with cheeks aflame, and then kissed him softly on the brow.

When he raised his head she was gone and her parting foot sounded lightly on the stair. He never knew how the word "Yes," trembling on her lips, was frozen by the pride of dependence, but, in that one sad hour Bashford, for the first time, mourned his vanished youth. "It shall be all the same at the end," he said, as he went away, "for, I will never love another mortal being. She shall have it all. The Hall and all the rest."

CHAPTER V.

THE JUNIOR PARTNER.

It was a long and weary blank in Hiram Bashford's gray tinged life, that month before Madeleine Ware, pale of face, but with strangely gleaming eyes, quietly resumed her desk at the legal fortress on William Street. The great counselor had been unwearied in sending his mute messengers of fond remembrance. Books, flowers, the little social bric-a-brac of life, all these had brought a tender thrill to the woman whose sick-room intercession was only a maddening suspense. She longed but for her work, for the induced forgetfulness of daily fatigue, and felt a lurking desire to get away out of New York, somewhere, anywhere, for the golden chain began to gall at last. "He is so good, so noble, so tender," she thought, as the flowers at her side breathed forth their incense in a mute intercession for the disheartened man who now walked the resounding floors of his lonely house, gaunt-faced and hollow-eyed.

Both of them knew that the veil had at last been torn away. She was but a woman, after all these vague dreams. Madeleine Ware feared to face the little legal world in which she was only a neglected microcosm. "They will all know," she tremblingly said, for the scales had also fallen from her eyes. "First and last,

only a woman after all," she mourned. There would be never any more those delightful evenings in which her friend led her along into the uplands of higher thought; the half hours of frankly unrestrained admiration in which she followed the clear rill of pure law flowing from his lips as he bent over her own projects of brief and pleading. They had seen each other clearly at last, and she stood before him as only a woman, weak, defenseless, and a thing to be sought for, to be passionately desired, to be folded in arms throbbing with the pulses of manhood. Fear wrapped her as in a mantle, and in the few interviews of the first month her nature, chilled and startled, closed up as a clasped book, resisting even the touch of his hand. For she had curiously mistaken the delicacy of his desire to shield her from the general assault of the Goths of Gotham. Loyal and true at heart, Bashford sorrowed alone with a mighty sorrow. "She thinks that I, too, would hound her down into the conspicuous bondage of a brilliant moneyed marriage. A mere bargain and sale contract." He knew not women. He did not even know himself, and he did not realize that his single-hearted devotion to her had lifted him far above the demands of self. And, yet, marred as he was, by worldly scars, he was yet far above her in this. Her instinctive self-defense was needless. And, as all women ultimately stand together against man, it pained and rebuffed him to find Mrs. Van Cortlandt also sullenly ranged on the other side. The good widow's mind had been tuned to a wordly key and she fancied that now she saw an ample justification for his previous generosity in the pushing of what was to her a mere coldly-pushed matrimonial mortgage.

The welcome approach of her usual summer vacation was a decided relief to the dowager. "Thank heaven, Mrs. Renwick will be home in November," mused the widow. "And, she must then take her off my hands. I can do nothing. The girl must either go back to her social status, or find another home to continue her foolish experiments in defying the world's long-settled

codes." The good widow fitted snugly enough into her cushioned arm chair and, tired of battling in this vale of unceasing jar and fret, was most admirably adapted to the rôle of the human oyster. "I have gone just as far as I can," she decided, oyster-like, not having gone very far. But she easily decided that she was not her sister's keeper. "At the last, I fancy, she will be sensible and accept him," was her sighing verdict. It was not exactly the Claude Melnotte style of a romance, but Mrs. Van Cortlandt was a great believer in the potency of a checkbook and the ease of a victoria, as compared with the varied "rapid transit" systems gauged on the five-cent plan. "After all, what can a woman do but yield at last," mourned Mrs. Van Cortlandt, who was prepared, modestly, to yield herself if "pressed" by a man of sufficient audacity and undoubted solid eligibility. The news of a great national trust being given to the capable hands of the counselor agitated both the girl, now mentally "all at sea," and the widow, who had delicately notified Miss Ware that a sojourn in some other haven of Manhattan would be needed to cover the social eclipse of four months. "Perhaps she will not ever wish to come back," thought the widow, with a cowardly desire to rid herself of the ambitious girl whose life was only a series of fortuitous problematic positions, each more difficult of proper social solution. The State Department of the United States had called upon Hiram Bashford to battle abroad, almost single-handed, for American interests in one of the "High Joints," now so happily in vogue, to replace the more forcible sulphurous arguments of the cannon. It would take the great advocate abroad for a period of many months and, though not pecuniarily advantageous, the sorrowing man promptly accepted it. It brought a thrill of joy to two of the fellow laborers in the legal vineyard. The harvest of the season had been a rich one. Never before had the forensic enemies been smote so deeply, hip and thigh. In consultation with Blake and Bodley, Bashford congratulated his associates upon the fatness of the vintage. "There's no reason

why you cannot take your run abroad as usual, Bodley," said the chief. "You will be back by the fall re-opening of the courts. We can use the cable freely and I can see you often in Europe." Bodley was delighted, for he felt that his aspiring spouse would glitter among the feminine following of the other continental "High Jointers" as a bright particular star. "I may perhaps need you to help me out over there," reflectively said Bashford, for his new honors did not lift his leaden heart a single throb. Blake lifted up the eyes of a man eager to thread the tangled ravines of the McCloud River once more. "What about me?" "Oh, you can fish to your heart's content," gaily said Bashford, "for Withers will be 'at the front,' and Bennett has told me that he is willing to take charge for the summer. He is certainly a devilish capable fellow—a human steam engine," heartily continued the chief. "He has his eyes on a Congressional nomination this fall," ejaculated the happy Blake. "He wants to stay here and woo the Tammany tiger." "He'll get there, too," remarked the cautious Bodley. "He is a man to get there every time. I never saw a man who could keep his head as clearly in the tangle of business. He has every case in our office at his fingers' ends." It was unanimously decided that the jewel raked up by Blake should swing the firm's signature alone and "hold the fort" till October first, when Bodley would again take up the legal "bat." It seemed to suit all round, a generally satisfactory arrangement. "By the by, what about Miss Ware?" timidly said Bodley, who had never referred to the modern Portia since the notable rebuff he had received from the chief. Bashford's face clouded. "I had not thought of that," he said gravely. "I will induce her to take a year's rest, if possible. I wish her to go over to Pennsylvania for a few months of the Blue Ridge magic air. She has been working too hard."

"The cramped conditions of city life are against her, coming from dreamy old Delaware," said Blake. "And I suppose that few women have the rough powers of

resistance we enjoy. But she is a wonder. Why, Bennett tells me that she has never made a single mistake in practice, and he would sooner trust her than Withers to get up a case. Now, that's saying a good deal, for Withers is the best law clerk in New York and our cases have never been as well prepared as lately. Bennett takes Miss Ware's opinion every time in preference to Withers'. For she has that clear, logical training and grasp of pure legal principles that he lacks, crafty as he is." Hiram Bashford lingered in silence as if lost in deep thought. Bodley venturously spread the contents of his "universal oil" flask with a gentle sigh. "It's a shame, a crying shame, that she was born a woman." "Why so?" growled Bashford, waking from his trance. "That one little defect has ruined a really great lawyer," honestly replied Bodley. "A woman has no chance in the world, save under the loosely-fitting armor of matrimony," he continued. "They always make the best running in double harness." "Why should not this young lady succeed at last?" queried the chief, looking squarely into the faces of the two partners. "Well, you know," said the thoughtless but manly Blake. "You see, a woman has to fight herself clear and to get breathing room before she can take up her real work. And, one after another, they get tired, lonely, disheartened, discouraged and drop the defensive. Just then some watching fellow jumps in and, taking the weakest moment, when she is sorely shaken by trial or natural emotion, marries her or—" The junior partner paused, for there was a dark gleam in the old gray eagle's eyes. "Or what?" Bashford demanded. "Or something happens to wreck her career," said Blake, as he fled away, for, he was navigating in shallow water.

"I will leave all the office responsibilities to you, Bodley," said Bashford, as he rose. "You must overlook the juniors. I am not feeling just up to the mark."

They clasped hands in silence and then Hiram Bashford dejectedly strode out of the office without a word. Blake's frank declarations and Bodley's regrets over that fatal bar of sex haunted him all the way uptown.

"Still for those slips of hers, one of Eve's family," he murmured. "Now, if she had only been born to manhood, I could easily have found a son in her, left her my fortune, and made the adopted one, heir to my practice. But the 'dark tide of royal blood' flows between us. The fatal possibility of wifehood, motherhood, with its blended cup of joys and sorrows, the bitter-sweet draught, a Pandora's gift."

He stopped a half hour at his bank and then quickly caught the nearest cab and hurried uptown. Miss Ware had been absent from the office for several days upon the plea of "private business." The wifeless, childless man wondered vaguely what the "private business" might be. He had avoided both his beautiful charge and the easy-going dowager in these days of strange embarrassment. For Madeleine Ware had lately avoided him, beyond the mere necessary intercourse of the office. He felt at heart that a barrier had been set up between them. It could not enter his generous nature that the proud independence of the lonely woman caused her to lean away from him in these, her hours of the saddest unrest. He knew not that a thousand uneasy projects had entered her restless mind. To go away and hide herself in the West, to teach, to essay literature, to face the world among strangers—all these things came to perplex her. For well she knew that they never could be to each other the frank, intellectual comrades of old. The master and pupil relation had vanished forever, for he had desired her in his heart, and the unhappy girl smarted under the wound her own hand had dealt him. She had been quick to see the altered mood of that graceful Philistine, Mrs. Van Cortlandt. She had quietly cast about her, and the first retreat offering a respectable degree of safety had been selected.

After nights of wrestling with the problem, Madeleine Ware had decided to go on to the end, rough and flinty as the road was. It seemed even easier to her now. "I will make the best of it," she cried, listening to the siren voice of womanly pride and ambition. "If I

cannot wear the crown, I will bear the cross. I will not be a dependent, I will not take the bounty of the hand I have rejected in marriage. His pity, his love, neither. But I will work to be respected by all men, even—" She shuddered as the wolves on her track came up in her mind's eye. "He will be away a long while. I will work through the summer, and perhaps another place may be open to me out in the Far West." For she knew too well that the border and Southern States opened no promising field to the aspiring individual woman.

The depth of their estrangement became apparent to Hiram Bashford as he was ushered into that old social "battle ground," Mrs. Van Cortlandt's drawing rooms. For at the door, men were loading a van with the trunks and book chests ominously marked M. W. Mrs. Van Cortlandt glided to her lair, unobserved, as Madeleine Ware, in street costume, noiselessly entered the rooms. Bashford sprang up, his heart beating wildly. "What is all this, Madeleine? You are going away, whither?" He had clasped both her hands, and the woman's heart melted. Though all too fond and blind, she could not but see the distress in his face and it touched her to the quick. For a wave of gratitude rolled over her shaken soul and she feared now that he loved her but too tenderly, far beyond the idea of self. She had acted only with that self-protective instinct which causes the maiden to ward away the first direct attack upon her personality, the first rude assertion that sooner or later she must be the thrall of one man, or the plaything of more than one.

"I did not wish to burden you with my petty cares. Mrs. Van Cortlandt leaves for the summer. You are going far away and I must live somewhere, for I shall keep up my office work and studies all summer." Bashford hurled himself into a chair and passed his hand over his eyes as if to clear away a clouding mist. Madeleine Ware stood there trembling at heart before him, and in her beautiful eyes the unshed tears were already lurking.

"This must not be. Your sheet anchor is your home. I will cable to Mrs. Renwick. I will see Mrs. Van Cortlandt."

The modern Portia shook her head gravely. "Trust to me. It is better so. I must go on, go on to the end," were her faltered words.

He drew her down beside him. "Listen to me," he said, "you are wearing out body and soul. Do not be blind to the true interests of your future. Go back to the Hall for a year. Let me open it. Jarvis will attend to all. I'll send Mrs. Bradford back there. Let me send your luggage there. I'll send all your books down. You can have Jarvis' library at your disposal. I'll have Hugh send everything from Castle Atwater. You need a rest—a long rest. You have bravely met the ordeal of the first year. You have the golden years of youth and—art is long. There is that action against Shearer. I wish you to study it up with Jarvis & Thorne. I will have to have it set over for the term. When I come back I will come down and try it. I'll leave you *carte blanche* till my return. Flossie Renwick will be back in November. Have a year's calm and quiet commune with yourself, and then, come back to us."

The girl struggled with her warring soul, and in an ill-starred moment of tender pride Bashford told her of his colleague's praise—of Seaton Bennett's verdict! It was a fatal admission of her advance in the difficult tangles of the way perilous! "Did he say that?" the woman said, speaking under her breath. "Who?" rejoined Bashford. "Mr. Bennett!" replied Madeleine, with her eyes down drooping. It gave the lonely woman a strange thrill at heart, for never a glance of the eyes of the new guiding spirit of the firm had rested squarely upon her face.

"He believes in your undoubted talent—and predicts your final success!" was Bashford's rejoinder. A faint crimson glow tinged the face of the woman at his side, and, bending under his laurels, Bashford forgot that Bennett was yet in life's ambrosial morning. He waited for his answer, and then the girl, with averted

face, murmured: "I thank you. I thank you from my heart of hearts; but I will be happier at my work—and I have already engaged my summer accommodations. I supposed that Mrs. Van Cortlandt had told you all!"

"She has told me nothing!" wrathfully replied Bashford, and he mentally determined to "have it out" with this slip-shod guardian of the rebellious angel. "If you are absolutely determined upon this course," gravely said the baffled advocate, "I must notify my associates, and make the proper dispositions for my absence. But I beg you to listen—to hear me—to grant this parting wish! Madeleine, can you do nothing for me—nothing to send me away light-hearted?" His rugged heart was heaving in a strange storm of emotion. And again the fair woman at his side, in her affrighted inexperience, read the words wrongly! It was the olden suit, the offer of his name and fortune, in another form! She thought tenderly of the wooded reaches of the Delaware, of the fragrant breath of summer stirring the rose tangles of the dear old Hall—of the moonlight silvering the sweep of the blue waters, and the song of the birds under her window. "It cannot be! It cannot be! Don't you see how I suffer? My God! I cannot bear it!" she sobbed, and her head was bending low as she covered her face with her thinned hands!

Hiram Bashford arose in a silence which seemed to her an age! There was a look of intense pain upon his face which frightened her. "How old and worn he looks!" she thought, with a self-accusation which needed no beating of the heart, no "*mea culpa*," to tell her of the woe she herself had wrought! For they had found out that they were only man and woman after all, and the primal curse of Eve was upon her! The burden of sorrow and the breaking of hearts! "I sail in two weeks," he said, in a muffled voice. "Hugh Atwater is my only confidential representative. I presume that you can trust him—if you cannot trust me! There is one thing I must do! I must see you in your

new home before I sail, and now, I have but one favor to ask! I could not be tranquil a moment if I knew that you were in any way dependent upon others, or forced to transact the vulgar details of life with mere strangers. Here is a certificate of deposit, in your own name, for five thousand dollars! Anything else, Hugh will provide, for—he has my *carte blanche*!” The sobbing woman felt the foretaste of the long days of absence in the warning words! She knew that she would be soon left alone—a very “stranger within the gates.” She had measured the shallow affections of the complacent widow! Flossie Renwick, too, was far beyond the seas—and Hugh Atwater seldom left his fastnesses in the Pennsylvanian hills, where he ruled over the toilers among the flaming furnaces. And yet, though her spirit yearned toward the strong man who was now going, pride and the fatal revolt against dependence hardened once more her throbbing heart. “My salary I can always take from you—nothing else! Make that arrangement in any way you wish. But, I will not accept this proffered money!” Bashford sprang to his feet and faced her, strong in his revolt against the spider-web thralls which bound her down. “Take this money, Madeleine!” he sternly said. “You shall not break my heart! If you do not,” he firmly said, noting her hesitation, “I leave this house only to telegraph my resignation to the State Department! Then, by heavens,” he cried, “I will stay at home—and—watch over you, from a distance,” and he thrust the folded paper between her nerveless fingers.

There was no withstanding Lancelot in his glory! The little hand of Madeleine Ware trembled for a moment in his grasp. Bashford raised her cold fingers to his lips. “Some day you will know all, child!” he sadly said. “The gloomy panorama of a lonely man’s heart! Do as you will, my dear one, and may God be with you now and always!” He was gone before the pale-faced Portia could reach the door! Her arms were outstretched toward the great-hearted comforter, who had left with the anguish of despair thrilling every *fibre of his loyal nature.*

And only a few paltry treacherous moments stood between her and the peace and happiness of his care forevermore! Her trembling lips had faltered "Come back!" but Bashford was already speeding along, heedless of his way. The summer sun had lost all its glory and brightness, and he cared not whither he wended! The world was now but a peopled void to him!

Far away down town, in his fox hole in the William Street fortress, Mr. Seaton Bennett was leisurely preparing to move up Broadway. "Bashford's off for a year—Blake out of the way—old Bodley mooning around Europe, and the fair Portia here for all summer, alone! The deal is with me!" He smiled and plucked a fading rose from his buttonhole, crushing it under his foot, as he went dreaming on his way.

No man was more admired in the afternoon parade of the New York city notables drifting uptown that evening than the alert, handsome young lawyer, whose sparkling eyes and swinging stride spoke of the stimulus of success. Hats were doffed right and left as Seaton Bennett sped along, the envy of his less fortunate fellows. He dropped into the Hoffman House in his course to note if any of the chiefs of the Wigwam were there. For, already in the outstretched arm of that worshiped fetich of yore, "Tamanend of Delaware," now, "Tammany of New York," he saw the signal waving him on to the success he coveted. That outstretched red man's arm was signaling him to cast his eyes toward Washington! Bennett fondly dreamed of a golden future as he sat in the saloon at a corner table, keenly watching the entrance of the café. "There has been a quarrel between them," he mused, as the face of the Greek-browed girl returned to him, the alluring face that had haunted his restless slumbers so long. For the bitter lusts of a Caligula burned in fierce red embers under the calm exterior of his hard, bright face! "Bennett will never die of enlargement of the heart!" was the just prediction of the class historian at Columbia. He had been quick to notice the growing estrangement which had escaped the eyes of the other two part-

ners. For the fish scales had not yet fallen from Blake's eyes, and Bodley was engaged in the details of the triumphant foreign incursion of his imperious Alexander in petticoats! "I would just like to know all the facts!" he glowered, as he pondered over the promising future. "She has no near friends! The Chief is the very last man to give away a pointer, and I might perhaps make play on this Mrs. Van Cortlandt!" He gave the latter forlorn hope up, after a most careful cogitation. "The widow's a New York woman—cold and smart! I could not get away from her after being confidential, and that would be dangerous in the future! She is just as heartless as the rest of the New York women. The office people, too, know nothing of 'My Lady Disdain!' By God! She is a human iceberg! But, even ice can be warmed and melted with friction! I suppose that the rude Chief went a little too far, and is now 'old man afraid of his record!' But I will have these long summer days all to myself! If she stays, sooner or later that woman shall be mine!" Bennett started as a heavy hand was laid in a rough friendship on his shoulder. The rising lawyer resented the familiarity, but his face relaxed as Michael Doolan, Esq., of Long Island City, dropped into a chair beside him. Mr. Doolan, familiarly known as "Red Mike," was a shining light of the Long Island Democracy. His "oasis" on a prominent corner of that delightful burg, Long Island City, was the most resplendent gin palace on the E. st River. Its plate glass, gaudy pictures and long mahogany bars were the pride of the "boys!" In the convenient card rooms—thug and billiard sharp, "green goods man" and "short card" practitioner lurked to pounce upon the thrifty Long Island farmers returning from exchanging their garden truck for standard "green goods." Pool room, stock ticker, and adjacent bedrooms, accommodated all grades of the "fancy," from the "gentlemen" who disappeared for a few days, down to those who "stood not on the order of their going!" Mr. Doolan's four young men, active with ice pick and revolver, "maintained order" at this

"palatial establishment," aided by the sleek police who "battered upon this delectable moor." The great "John L." had heretofore honored Doolan with many "nights off," and the "joint" was the headquarters for quiet little gay parties "with or without crinoline attachments!" Tug and yacht captain, railroad conductor, ferryman and rounder—all these sharp fellows bowed to the haughty Doolan, resplendent in his "headlight" diamond and the huge watch presented by the "Michael J. McMonagle Association," of the Ninety-Sixth Ward. A man of men was Doolan! Great at chowder confection—and an infallible authority upon fishing, duck shooting, and all the outings of the "sports" of Manhattan. "Red Mike" proudly boasted the title of a "square man," and his crimsoned visage, broad shoulders, keen ferret eyes and aureole of carrotty hair were an oriflamme of victory to the cohorts who followed him.

Those hidden chieftains who pulled the wires of New York politics well knew Doolan's low sagacity, his energy, his rapacity and his brutal disregard of the flimsy conventionalities of law and order. "A safe man to push a ticket in danger," and to "roll up a majority." There was a sub-riparian political telepathy connecting "Red Mike" with the Lords of Tammany; and many and frequent were the councils of war held at his coign of vantage, so easily reached from New York, in diverse handy ways, and "far from the madding crowd" of reporters! "Have something?" carelessly said Bennett, who wished to dispatch his too prominent friend with haste. And yet, "Red Mike" was a power—a man not to be lightly offended! In his own up-town practice, Bennett had drifted into a casual acquaintance, ripening into a confidential understanding! Doolan himself regarded Bennett as a "coming man," and the lawyer knew he would some day have use for the prize fighter, whose knobby fingers closed now on the welcome Manhattan cocktail, displaying a wealth of large, light brown freckles on his hairy hands, gleaming with several diamond rings of price.

4-10-99

"See here, Counselor!" huskily whispered Doolan. "There's a rare shindy coming on this year! Now's yer time to make a dash for Congress, and if ye play yer cards right, ye can have it this very fall!" "What is up?" anxiously said the ambitious lawyer. "There's a growing dissension in the Hall," curtly answered Red Mike. "If ye play yer cards right—I can help ye in this fall, now—the Long Island Sporting Club has a nice little haunt away down by Sag Harbor, and, from Saturday to Monday, this season, there'll be men down there who can soon put you where you belong! Come over and see me—and I'll make a deal with ye!" "What is this club?" doubtfully queried Bennett. He was held several points above last year's rating, and he "felt his oats!" "Oh! The club! That's me! It's a little nest of my own!" proudly answered the leading "Spiritual Adviser" of Long Island City. "But every Saturday there's a little junta there ye ought to be in! There's"—and he leaned over in an alcoholic nimbus, whispering names that charmed the doubting parvenue. "I'll come when you want me!" resolutely said Bennett. "Then," heartily said Doolan, "you do the right thing with me, and ye're a made man! Ye stand well at the Hall. This big firm has done the business for you, but Lord love ye, if ye were left alone, they'd skin ye alive! Trust to me and I'll see you through and give you a square deal!"

"What must I do first?" eagerly murmured Bennett. "Only hold yerself free to move into the district that we may decide on, and then register there openly! If I make the turn, your part is only dumb show!" laughed Red Mike. "I'll be over to see you next Saturday!" pledged Bennett, as he noted curious eyes now fixed upon them.

When Bennett fell into uneasy dreams that night, he was tortured by both passion and ambition! But he had looked over the chess board! "This is one of the fine ones, this Delaware iceberg," he murmured. "Left to herself, she will lean my way yet! I will be thrown into an easy daily contact with her now! A little judi-

cious flattery on the legal career will thaw the outer crust! And—then—we will see—we will see!” But the very last thing he saw before his drooping eyelids was the tempting suffix M. C. to his own name. “Red Mike” had been the fairy godfather of his day dreams!

There was no hint of rapprochement between the head of the great firm and the beautiful neophyte evident to the lynx-eyed Bennett up to the very moment of Bashford finally leaving the William Street offices, on the eve of his sailing for Europe. A last long conference of the three seniors occupied that parting day—and Bennett, in the occasional interims of routine, saw no sign of unrest upon the face of the stately woman who seemed all unmindful of the going! A frank and hearty farewell from Bashford was coupled with the remark: “As Blake and Bodley go down to the steamer, I shall probably not see you there!” The words of compliment which followed were worthy of Bennett’s low bow! The dreaming young Caesar affected a humility which had no place in his crafty nature. He was now playing his lone hand—and playing it to win!

Bennett was curiously eager as he entered the office on the Saturday morning of the sailing! His furtive eyes turned at once to Miss Madeleine Ware’s sanctum. She was busied at her usual duties, and as unruffled as if her heart were not filled with the stormy wretchedness of a feeling of utter loneliness, a loneliness akin to despair! With a fine artfulness, Seaton Bennett avoided breaking in upon her in the absence of the seniors, but—in the retirement of his privacy—he chuckled and rubbed his firm white hands. “Things are going the right way!” he cheerfully murmured, as he remembered his tryst with Red Mike on this Saturday afternoon, to meet the honorary members of the Long Island Sporting Club. “Mike has truly selected a good quiet corner for his devilment,” he chuckled. “Away up near Sag Harbor, among the sleepy islanders, a man could launch a battle ship out of the reach of the gay and festive reporter!” And so he left “My Lady Disdain”

to that silent strain which always breaks down the woman nature at last, the burden of her own loneliness!

"She is a shy bird, this Delaware beauty," he mused, "but, she will flutter down—at last. I wonder if the 'coolness' has really settled into a frozen deadlock!" Still he was as yet powerless to read the story of that pale, steadfast face bending over the jargon of the craft which they both followed!

Far out at sea, Hiram Bashford looked sadly back to the fading shores of America, and bitterly realized that in this case the "one who goes" was not happier than the one who was "left behind!" He had made a final pilgrimage to the "model apartment house for women," wherein Madeleine Ware had taken her refuge under a year's engagement. He had charged Bodley, the only family man of the firm, with certain private commissions of loving tenderness. They included a visit in due state by the resplendent Mrs. Bodley, and also a blank guarantee in regard to Miss Ware, extended to the agents of this improved Noah's ark—"for women only!" "Is there anything else that I can do?" he had demanded of himself. With a delicate consideration, he begged a parting favor of Madeleine Ware, seated in her reception room on the evening before his sailing. His heart smote him as he noted the carefully contrived excuses for the absence of real comforts, known as "the greatest modern luxury!" The beautiful woman, who had once been a stately figure in the splendid setting of the old manorial Hall, seemed out of place in this compressed human hive. Miss Ware, however, was tremblingly alert and fearful of some newly offered evidence of his tender foresight.

"I have notified Mr. Bodley, Madeleine," he cheerfully said, "that you will have the sole use of my offices and my private library in my absence. Here are the keys! You have under your control a private door to each of the rooms, and you will thus be entirely removed from the slightest interruption of your studies! Mr. Bodley alone will represent me in all the firm's af-

fairs—and I have asked him to deliver to you in my absence, all my private correspondence and papers. He will also give you the safe keys of my private vault, and here is a memorandum of my wishes. If you wish to use the cable, then Bodley or Withers will instantly attend to it! I depend only upon you in these confidential private matters!"

Madeleine Ware dared not refuse the trust, coupled with these delicate arrangements for her future comfort and privacy. She feebly said: "I shall try to do my very best!" And then, with the deliberate self-deception of two estranged hearts, they lingered in an exchange of the mere platitudes which can be made to fill up the slowly crawling minutes! They left unsaid the things which they ought to have said, and said the things which they ought not to have said! When Bashford's anxious heart at last forced him to come back again to his old offers of the Hall, the girl's eyes were downcast, when he simply said: "Hugh and Jarvis will fit up the Hall for you at a moment's notice; remember that! I hope you will see your way to going down there! Remember it is yours at a moment's notice! Will you not be now persuaded?" With a sinking but defiant heart, the lonely woman resolutely replied: "My place is here, at my work! I cannot, I must not go away!" "I shall certainly see Florence Renwick, and beg her to write to you—and to urge this sensible plan upon you!" he persisted, in his old frank way. But, he was chilled and rebuffed, for her voice was strangely hardened as she said: "It would make no difference; I have taken my rooms here for a year!" The pauses of constraint in their converse had lengthened into an agonizing strain upon the woman who now felt the last ties of the past, hallowed by his loving kindness, breaking one by one! Bashford could not avoid seeing the sorrow which lurked behind this unnatural calm! "Promise me, for the sake of my peace of mind, Madeleine, that you will at least write to me each week, and—that you will consult me before making any change in your life! I may not see the way as

clearly as you do—but, I think that I have a right at least to know of your well being. You would not have me learn it from others?" Her whispered words, "I promise!" hardly reached his ear as he rose. "And now, God bless you! I go, but remember, first and last, you are to call on me!" Her bloodless hands reddened under his convulsive grasp, and his foot echoed heavily upon the stair, as he went out hopelessly into the night! It was a dreary "Good-bye!"

She looked down from her casement—and there, in an uneasy march, she saw the stalwart form of the man she had sent away so coldly, striding up and down, a sentinel of love—under the darkened windows of his rebellious charge. She dared not call him back. Madeleine Ware staggered to her couch, and her last cry of lonely anguish voiced the prayer of her heart! "If he did not love me—if he only would forget me!" But, sundered in spirit, only the two who had parted knew that the legal experiment had failed already! Bashford swore that night a mighty oath, that his death should set her far above the unequal struggle against the counter tide of opinion! "She will know me, at last—some day, she will know all!" he vowed in his heart of hearts. For he now felt himself powerless to change the way of the world, and he had also learned, to his bitter cost, that the world will have its way! That no relation he could form with her, save the proprietary one of marriage, was proof against the world's sneer! And his keenest pang, as the ocean winds drove the vessel on, was the thought that the girl still feared the assertion of his demand for her hand, by the evidences of her unpaid debt of gratitude!

The first general order issued by Commander-in-Chief Bodley after the departure of *that* eminent counsel of the United States, Hiram Bashford, was to carefully acquaint the juniors with Bashford's directions in regard to the modern Portia. Bodley had "swelled visibly" under the new sense of his enhanced importance, although the mantle of the absent chief fitted him a trifle loosely! But bravely did he ruffle it, as he rang

his bell with all the dignity of a Richelieu who represented even more than his absent king! Much skirmishing with the artful partner of his bosom had made Bodley himself a bit of a strategist, and so he watched the face of Seaton Bennett—keenly—as he delivered Bashford's injunctions to that impassive young legal Napoleon.

The unshaken nerve of Mr. Bennett stood him in great stead upon this occasion. He had just returned in triumph from a first outing with the Long Island Sporting Club. There were already shadowy political crowns dancing before his eyes, and he had listened to voices as weirdly prophetic as those of the three grim witches who waited on the blasted heath for the battle consecrated Thane of Cawdor! Bennett only listened attentively to his senior's disclosure! His calm face showed no sign of interest, as he carelessly said: "I presume that you will transact all personal business for Mr. Bashford until your departure, however?" "Oh! Certainly, certainly. Miss Ware will only take charge of the current legal routine affairs for Bashford, after my departure. Of course, all his strictly private mail and papers will be at once handed over to her! By the way, I sail in a month myself!" Bennett took up his pen as he queried: "And, after your departure, Miss Ware will have sole charge for Bashford, in your absence?" "That's just it, and you will have absolute control of all the firm's business, after Mr. Blake goes away. Withers will report to you alone, and I have no doubt that Miss Ware will ask your advice in any matters peculiarly under her charge, while Blake and I are away. She is a woman of rare judgment, and, of course, no one is to interfere with her at all! She has *carte blanche* as far as Mr. Bashford's side of the house goes! It will relieve you, for you'll have enough to do, as it is!"

"All right!" simply said Bennett, as he gathered his papers, and then sped away to watch the calling of several heavy court calendars.

"This is a king strike," the young Caesar muttered,

"for, I will reign in the absence of these two men. Miss Ware shall have my very best assistance! I am hers to command!" and he smiled in thought at the long months of the summer vacation, and there was a delicious sense of triumph as he looked forward to the cosy future days of commune over the vast details of Bashford's own affairs. "The courts will be out, and I fancy I can put in a very pleasant summer between the Long Island Club and this shy bird of Paradise! She is fluttering down to me at last!" And his hard heart was strangely light.

Dark words of prophecy! True words of keen prescience! For the golden days of the early summer changed slowly into the fierce glare of the solstice. There was the same decorous swing of the legal pendulum, ever pulsing in the half deserted fortress on William Street. The listless students had one by one dropped away for the vacation like nerveless leeches, gorged with the imbibed legal pabulum. The clerks, in due rotation, fled forth to taste their scanty summer joys, and even the pert typewriters divided the diminished labors in rotation—these keen-eyed majority lending a new enchantment to the murmuring sands of the gay Manhattan Beach and lively Long Branch! Two of the four great elevators of the huge business building were now sufficient for the upward travel of the vicarious crowds, and the absent Blake and Bodley were deep in their respective fads of "fish" and "French millinery!" The journals of the time were full of the reported doughty deeds of America's legal champion, battling afar over the green table of the High Joint—and even Nathaniel Withers—he of the parchment cheek and fishy eyes—had found him a lair in New Jersey, where he gallantly fought the fierce mosquitoes, and, thus busied, "enjoyed the summer!" The City of New York sweltered, glowed, shimmered, and cooked itself up to a blood heat in the slowly dragging dog days. The half-deserted offices of Bashford, Blake and Bodley now presented strange paradoxes of queerly divided duty!

The head clerk came late and departed early! But, while every unwilling subordinate, relaxed and enfeebled, sought the emotional relief of shirking duty, going in for the "beer and skittles" of life, Seaton Bennett, alone, came earlier and went later daily!

For there were no buoys now marking out the safety channel of Madeleine Ware's voyage of life! The daily dispatch of Hiram Bashford's accumulating mail, the detail of his current business, busied the modern Portia day by day. There were frequent affairs which called for hours of serious conference between the alert junior partner and the beautiful neophyte! Gliding along—unmarking the growing intimacy—the woman never noted the flight of these many hours passed alone with the new-found companion of her professional life! Mr. Seaton Bennett himself now carried one of the keys to Hiram Bashford's offices—and his daily offering of exquisite flowers was the first thing which greeted the eyes that were slowly learning to "brighten when he came!"

For, youth is only youth—and there are always sentinels who nod on post! The outside guard of Prudence often took a nap of forty winks in the glowing days of these summer months. Bennett had a rare diffident manner of flattering the lovely woman, with bringing to her all his own difficult problems. Led on by this insidious deference—she, too, began to lean upon the man who leaned upon her, and the two heads bent often very near together over "Mr. Bashford's business."

BOOK II.—One of Eve's Family.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

Seaton Bennett, the hunter, warmed daily with the excitement of his hidden chase of the beautiful orphan, whose heart was already in a state of siege, although she had not yet "manned its walls." For the insidious approach was through the avenue of the head, and veiled by a community of tastes, and their joint labors. There was a thrill of conscious pride in the girl's bosom as Withers, the head clerk, silently submitted brief and paper, contract and pleading, for her revision. "Mr. Bennett says that I am to let nothing of importance go out in his absence without submitting it to you!" was the explanation given by the chief of staff. The compliment burned in the tell-tale roses upon Madeleine's cheek, for the great waves of the world rolled over her unheeding, in her scholarly isolation. Withers' eyes once or twice sought Bennett's in a mute inquiry, as the acute clerk noted the growing length of the seances in Bashford's own den! "I must soon shift the scenes," mused Bennett. "This cat-like fellow is beginning to hark forward on the trail." Bennett had not known Mr. Withers' ways long enough to realize that he was keeping a Black Book on every one of the legal heavy battery. He was, however, wise in his generation, this growing lawyer, the rising star of younger Tammany, the choice spirit, now fully initiated, of the Long Island Sporting Club. "I must throw the good Nathaniel off the track," he mused, and to that end, vigorously took up a volunteer examination of the case

of Estate of Ware vs. Shearer. Bennett was now frequent in inquiry as to Hiram Bashford's probable return, for Withers always dispatched a weekly précis letter of the firm's affairs. "You see, Withers, that important case may come at any time after October first, and if Jarvis and Thorn want any help, I presume that Miss Ware will go down there and coach them through."

The head clerk never dreamed but that the chief had given detailed directions to Bennett in these matters. All seemed to favor the "creeping up" process of the impassioned hunter, who now thrilled to every turn of the chase and every movement of the beautiful quarry. But—delightful as was the growing intimacy—he would soon have no further excuse to submit his points and daily legal movements to the woman who drifted nearer to him with every day. "Blake and Bodley will be home in a few weeks," he mused one day. "I must change the scene of this little legal flirtation!" He felt assured that Madeleine had now made acquaintance with other women resident in the "model apartment house." "There is my vantage ground! To make myself at home with any friends who know her there." He disliked, however, to give up this clandestine love-making in Hiram Bashford's own stronghold. It was deliciously exciting to use the chief's own study for the battle ground of man against woman! For he was coldly jealous of Bashford's wealth and standing. He felt in his own heart that Bashford had desired her—had perhaps offered her a golden bribe—the bait for an immediate surrender. But the golden charm of luck was his own, and he moved now with the deliberation of a master of chess. "One single suspicion," he rightly conjectured, "and Portia would throw me over forever! I must bide my time, and—but one subject is tabooed between us! Love! That will be a little side incident! It will come—it will come!" he murmured, with parched lips, for he was swept away beyond himself. A chance occurrence decided him to act at once. He overheard one of the argus-eyed type-

writers distilling some finely dropped poisoned gossip to the elevator attendant. "What one can see, all can see!" he ejaculated, in a sudden fear. And so he resolutely set about delving into the biographical and social details of the dwellers in the "model apartment house." "Once that I am introduced under that roof as a general visitor, her suspicions will be allayed—once acknowledged as an 'ami de maison,' there will be no frightening my fair, fond dove!" Bennett asked himself a hundred times if the current of her blue veins was frozen! "Can there be really a woman of this bizarre mould, in nervous New York?" he doubtfully mused. For among all those whom he had chased to bay in the gay city of Manhattan, there had not been a single "in-venue!"

Seaton Bennett smiled in a devil's cool glow of triumph as he scanned the list of the "rentières" in the model caravansera. There was one name especially which thrilled him with joy. It was that of a bright, old woman free lance, a journalist, whom all men feared, and many used. A lonely, defiant nature whose thuriel spear pierced deeply into the adipose shield of the social pretender, the moral sham and the pious fraud! A whirl in Gotham's eddying life had once thrown them together. And even now Seaton Bennett was "bon camarade" with this feminine privateer pressing on to unknown shores, with all sail set!

"I think I will give the Walton a nice little private dinner at the Brunswick!" he mused, for he knew that that fearless dame would, over the second bottle, give him, in her flushing Bohemian jargon, a graphic sketch of the interior to which he proposed to now transfer the struggle which daily filled his mind and heart, conjointly with the fierce secret campaign for standing in Lammany. "Yes! That's the very thing!" he gleefully said. "And if Minnie Walton still has her little bungalow down at Mamaroneck—I may have two set scenes for this little play! A little bit of open air theater might interest my coy Portia!"

That "little dinner" was a social and gastronomic suc-

cess! Never did Seaton Bennett pour out the half cynicism of his cultured mind in crisper and more audacious diamond showers of wit! A man who knew women well—the cold, self-reliant women of the hard world which shines and glitters in its adamantine armor. Bennett brought in his real “motif” with delicacy. But all in vain did he attempt to delude the argus-eyed Bohemienne. “You have some hidden scheme, my friend! Tell me a part of the truth—at any rate as much as you can afford to! Make as clean a breast of it as the nature of your business will allow! You are no Lovelace, my legal friend!” Bennett rang and ordered the third bottle of Pommery Sec. Before its creamy drops had vanished in the last draught, a loving cup pledge—Minnie Walton knew openly of Bennett’s congressional aspirations. The trim, tidy, dangerously light-hued blonde fixed her cobalt eyes, keenly on him as he deftly unwound his braided tissue of lies. “This girl has a singular influence over Bashford, and—the old chief runs the firm. Solid there, my background is vastly improved in Tammany Hall! It is only natural as the three seniors are absent that I would not expose her to comment down there!” Minnie Walton laughed a ringing, defiant laugh. “You were not always such a stickler in the line of prudery, prunes and prisms!” She had an unexampled memory, and also some shreds of conscience. “When did you ever try to shield a woman?” “It suits me to shield this one!” moodily answered Bennett, who felt that the sharp journalist was now making game of him. “She is a noble woman!” “Right you are!” heartily cried the practical Walton. “And a good woman—a true woman! See here, my friend, don’t go in for any ‘light comedy’ there! She has all the native mould of a tragedy queen!” “Why! It would be simple ruin for me to trifle with her!” truthfully said Bennett. “Can’t you see that I only want to control Bashford through her? Her father was his Yale classmate, and she is his Egeria! Why, his simple word of praise is my making! He could have the Senate at any time, or

even the bald honor of a life-long obscurity on the Supreme Bench of the United States!" Minnie Walton was not altogether persuaded. "If I did not know you were possessed of a 'level head,' and a devouring ambition, I would not believe you; but it may be true! We will assume that you are really afraid to harm her! It would topple down your house of cards! All men, however, try to fool all women! You are only herein playing the set game of your own delightful sex—but, with a wholesome awe! Now, my embryo Conkling, how about the financial part of your political edifice? Is it founded on a rock? Nothing for nothing in New York!" she laughed. "It takes money to buy honey!" "I can get the money—all I need—at the right time," confidently replied the man who always "got there." "My contract with this firm will see me well on my way! It is an enormous practice, and—they are very liberal with me! I have really worked like a dog—and this white-faced goddess is worth any two junior lawyers in New York! She presses 'on to the high mark of her calling!" he unconsciously quoted. "And will, to the bitter end!" honestly said the thirsty-looking blonde, who was "a power" in Newspaper Row. "She will not take the easy way!" mused Minnie Walton. "She will not stoop to conquer! If she falls, it will be only when trodden down under the rush! The rush of this woman-devouring town! For, hark you, my legal friend, the streets of New York are paved with women's bones and cemented with their heart's blood! I see them standing on the river bank, these simple women, and see their votive lights go out, one by one! But, as I am not afraid to trust her with you, I will do your bidding! But, I warn you! At the first sign of any exercise of your 'peculiar genius,' I will turn on the search light, and then, you'll lose her forever!" "And since when have you posed as a protector of virtue, Minnie?" sneered Bennett. "Since I met Madeleine Ware, who is too good for the rest of us—too pure to fitly associate with the swarming reptiles of business life—and whose proper place would be ruling a good man's

happy home!" "You think that all women look to marriage?" curiously demanded Bennett. "Yes!" decisively said the fair journalist. "Unless unsexed by religious enthusiasm—or driven daft with sorrows—unless tied down by the burdens of self-denial—the one and final natural interest of woman's life is marriage! Whether achieved or missed—the destiny is of the higher law of nature, which sweeps all before it! Delay, disappointment, adverse fate—all these but add to the force of the loosened flood when the barrier breaks!" "Why did you not follow out your rainbow-bowed theory?" quickly retorted Bennett. The newspaper woman grimly said: "Because I once met a man with just as much heart as you!" Bennett did not blanch, but steadily said: "Then, the late Walton—"

"Is a myth!" promptly responded Mrs. Minnie, "but I have cicatrized the scar, and I now take an independent hand in the game of 'catch as catch can'! Only, I keep within the line!" She bowed in mock humility, as, glancing at her jeweled watch, the gift of a railroad president, she said: "Now, you may take me home, sir! I don't bear malice, but mind your p's and q's when you come to our Temple of Virtue. We go in for 'a blameless life' there!"

Seaton Bennett was pleased—very well pleased—with the evening's campaign, as he finished the wee sma' hours at the club. Mrs. Minnie Walton had sketched the whole biography of the dwellers in the Adamless Eden, and besides promising to throw open her hospitable doors for a "conversazione," she had laid out certain little hospitable functions at the "bungalow," the sweetest little "tigers' lair" in all Mamaroneck. "How can I ever repay you?" the would-be statesman had murmured when she said: "You will meet at my 'conversazione' all the dwellers within our gates. You can easily 'spot' your Portia's intimates, and then go on from this auspicious start!"

Minnie Walton laughed her hard, worldly-wise ringing laugh as she dismissed him. "I will give you many opportunities to repay me! Now, such a 'little

er' is perfection—and I will fine you several of
1 for daring to worship other goddesses beside
' "Man and money ready!" lightly said Bennett
arting. "She is 'bon diable' after all," he apostro-
phed with great satisfaction.

The summer days sped on to the last weeks of va-
can! The social journals had already announced
impending return of Madame Bodley from "Horn-
s," and various other "burgs." The "High Joint"
still dragging its serpentine course along with duly
stipulated pauses for dinners of ceremony and other
social junketings. Bodley had flourished at the dip-
lomatic headquarters in the low countries as a volun-
teer aid of Hiram Bashford, while his haughty dame
de broad the phylactery" and cut a wide swath in
opposing femininity of the particular "effete
hierarchy" we were wrestling with in our bloodless
union. Blake, laden with fish tails, or tales of fishes,
now sadly counting the days on the upper McCloud
where the Nez Percés had not scalped him, leaving
cheerful task to the brave-hearted gallinippers of
dusky mountain glens. "I have thrown all these
dangling devils off the track," gleefully ruminated
on Bennett, who had dulled the eyes of the watch-
man Walton with several artfully chosen "wave and
e offerings." The floral tributes which regularly
thinned the dusky interior of Bashford's den were
suddenly delivered now, at Miss Madeleine Ware's
treatment. The grave faces of Webster, Choate, Kent,
Wy and Marshall looked down no more on the dew-
drenched roses, the starry forget-me-nots, the fragrant
lilies, or the lilies of the valley. Even Nathaniel
Hawthorne had ceased to spy upon Bennett, and the as-
sistant woman typewriter sadly confided to her own
deed, the elevator engineer, that "the little business
was off for good." Bennett was overjoyed at heart.
There was just the hovering suspicion of a treasured
net knitting him in golden links to the beautiful
Italia. The "conversazione" had truly been a "howling
cess." Never was a more quaintly assorted menage-

erie gathered in the bright-eyed Freelance's rooms. There were so many little "quiet understandings" arising from the convocation of "beauty and talent," that few cared to follow the springy steps of the alert young lawyer. There was no one to tell Madeleine Ware that a bright flush of the sea shell's pink now tinted her rounded cheek. Her mirror did not even flatter. In her eyes now shone the light of a new cheerfulness and she had learned at last to listen for Bennett's step upon the stair. It was with a rare delicacy that he refrained from forcing himself upon her tête-à-tête. There was always some one of the elastic circle in the "model apartment" who strangely dropped in. The new friends had frequently wandered far away from the dry details of the law and their daily office intercourse had grown into a callous mechanical routine. But the spell of her brooding loneliness was broken at last. Single-hearted and chastened by a lonely youth, the now happy Madeleine was utterly unsuspecting of the warming feelings now growing in her heart. She had never even realized her solitude. And buoyed up also by her goading ambition, she forgot that nothing is as lonely as an unloved woman; that no fortress is as feebly guarded as a woman's vacant heart, untouched by love. Her womanly nature, rich and strong, had risen in a mute protest against Bashford's age. Though her fresh young bosom had never throbbed with love and pain of love, her wounded pride, her self-protective fear of taking alms at his generous hands, had left her in an absolute darkness as to the unconscious influence of her virginal beauty, her stately splendor of natural endowment. But now, glowing in health, answering the mute appeal of Bennett's passion, burning in its hidden intensity, she leaned as willingly toward him, as the flower that loves the sun mutely follows the god of day. She noted not the growing chilliness of her routine reports to the absent chief. She looked not forward and she never gave a single glance behind. For in the long stolen days at Mamaroneck, when from Saturday morning to Monday noon she was the guest

of the brilliant woman journalist, she had timidly drawn aside the veil of her girlhood and, yielding to the growing charm, had told Seaton Bennett all the story of her life. How well he had learned all the lessons of his warning social mentor, Mrs. Minnie Walton, was shown in his care to avoid all public association with Madeleine.

Coming late and going early, on trains unfrequented by others, the statesman in embryo "hedged" his wagers in life with care. But it was the one summer of her life to the orphaned girl. Driving on the cool shaded lanes, or seated where the blue Sound, flecked with silver yacht sails, was spread out before her, she never thought of autumn's chilly blasts, of winter's coming drifted snows, in the brightness of these golden days. Bennett was a game sportsman and the moonlit waters of the Sound found them often in merry company skimming over the tranquil tide, where the outstretched white wings fanned them with the delicious coolness of night. The lonely woman's nature had blossomed out in a secret glow of self-given happiness. The glory of starlight and moonlight shone in her sparkling eyes. She went far afield with him to where the leafy brooks sang their drowsy lullabies to care. And so a peace was in her unawakened heart, brooding in its happiness, and "beauty born of murmuring sound" had passed into her face. There was no one to note this growing intimacy. The witchery of the summer was upon them all. The city worn pilgrims who came to the Bungalow moved in the enchanted summer land as if they wandered in dreamland. And, there was none to warn or guide the now defenseless woman. For she had laid down the armor of distrust and now walked frankly hand in hand with the one who joyed of her joys and sorrowed of her sorrows. Counselor Bennett never failed to enter into her dreams of the future with tender sympathy. He fed the fires of her high ambition with all the incense of his delicately-veiled flattery. He seemed to her to be all that she fondly thought him in her self-constituted estimate of the man. Generous,

bright, brave, alert and energetic, he easily bore away the palm of social superiority in the narrowed limits of the scenes around her. Madeleine had always regarded Blake and Bodley as hopelessly dwarfed by the great intellect of the absent chief. The underlings of the firm were her watchful hostile critics, her secret foes. She had soon learned the lesson of their secret aversion at her elevation to the rank of sole representative of the great counselor, now far away over the sea. But, Seaton Bennett's delicate and thoughtful consideration made the way easily smooth for her. And the shy woman's very inmost soul now thrilled to his inspiring presence. It never occurred to her to look forward to the closing period of this intimacy, as their common interests had drawn them into a path which seemed to be unending. She had already confided to the man who had so lightened up her life every ambition of her heart. "To stand in the open, admitted as the peer of my brethren of the bar, to have a voice at court, to be capable of independent professional action, that is the crowning test, and I must reach that goal, else all this is lost. All my years of preparation." She never doubted his hearty sympathy, as his voice grew strangely softened. "You shall have your heart's desire in all things." And then, into these last days came a fever of anxiety which drove Bennett into the stormiest moods of loosened passion, of biting desire. For the hunter had lingered too long by the side of the fair young quarry. He often paced his floor at night in a mad unrest. "This fool's Paradise of ours will soon be over," he groaned, as he checked each golden day off his mental calendar. He was without any present trick or subterfuge to craftily ensnare her. He greatly feared that keen-eyed woman cynic, Minnie Walton. He dared not attempt any flimsy trick of the seducer's art. Too well he knew the woman he sought was far above that. Marriage seemed to him to be impossible. It was truly the political gravestone of a poor and rising man. "If I do not bind her to me in some way before the return of my chiefs I will lose her forever. For Blake or Bod-

He would not fail to send a secret report to Bashford. If there were a secret to keep, though, she would keep it. He feared to take action, for all his crafty ways with womankind, to essay any futile deception of the lawyer's art. Long nights of self-commune only added to the fires smouldering in his veins. For before that sacred altar of inviolate youth he had paused, abashed, and yet driven on by a maddening passion.

"If I told Bashford all frankly he might aid me. He is as wax in her hands. I might marry her. He is rich, childless, without anyone to inherit his great wealth and the vast practice." The dream tantalized him, but the meaner side of his nature triumphed. "Fool to think of it," he bitterly cried. "Bashford loves her for himself. He would only cast me out and then press himself on her more vigorously." Counselor Bennett had no faith in the fabled magnanimity which would lead a man to give the woman he adored over to the open arms of a younger lover. "No! No man would do that—no man could do that," he firmly decided. "And, even if he would, Blake and Bodley look upon this splendid fabric of their years of toil as their own natural heritage. They would gladly drop me out. I would be at sea. I have thrown my javelin, and now I cannot get it back. If Bashford gave her money, it would be irreversibly tied up for her personal use. His death—that may be a matter of many years. It would ruin my political career—a penniless marriage. By God, there is a way. There shall be a way," he cried. "I will make the way. And I swear it, she shall never be another man's wife. She shall be mine alone. And I shall listen to her voice when she says, 'I love you. I love only you!'"

The surging passions of the night were not stilled within him as he found himself almost forced to bay, a week before the reopening of the courts. He had not advanced a single step toward the establishment of that secret which was to make her his willing thrall, when he entered her private office rooms hastily on arriving half hour late. He had used the side door, of which

the key, Bashford's trust, had been so far his only barren trophy. He sprang to the desk. There were the letters of an European mail scattered before the woman, whose beautiful head was now bowed upon her outspread arms and her stormy sobs echoed quivering in his heart. There was the shelter of the great tenantless rooms hiding from all the orphan's sorrow. In another moment Madeleine Ware had a secret to hide forever from the man who hungered far away for one glance of her dear eyes, for the sight of the face of the one woman of the whole world; the one who had brought a brief sunshine into his barren and lonely life. Seaton Bennett's strong arms crushed her to his heart as he rained kisses upon her pallid lips. His voice quivered with all the pent-up passions tearing his soul in the long maddening months of waiting. And there was no longer anything to dissemble when he had murmured twenty times, "Madeleine! My own Madeleine! I love you! Tell me all your sorrows."

No one in the office knew of the fitting of the pale-faced woman who quickly fled away as if pursued by the avenger of blood. The great, gloomy offices of Hiram Bashford were locked for many days, and on the morning of Miss Ware's disappearance the wondering Mr. Nathaniel Withers easily decided, "Bennett is certainly out of this mystery, for he came an hour late." The only sign vouchsafed to the overcurious head clerk before the opportune arrival of Messrs. Blake and Bodley was a note directing the immediate forwarding of all papers and letters at once to Miss Ware's apartment.

When the returning chiefs, Blake and Bodley, questioned Seaton Bennett he gravely said "I have not seen Miss Ware for a number of days. She is unfortunately ill, and I have been deprived of her most valuable assistance in getting up our new trial calendars."

In which Mr. Seaton Bennett deliberately lied, for he was now secretly master of the situation. The golden key had turned at last in the door of Madeleine Ware's heart and there was a secret to keep. For she had

given Bennett the right to repeat to her alone the strange, sweet story which her heart found a wondrous new revelation, "The old, old story." And she knew at last that he loved her, that he had loved her from the first, and her eyes had thrilled him in a love's matchless triumph as with her head upon his breast she had murmured, while the roses deepened on her cheeks, "Seaton, I love you, I love you, as you love me." When the statesman of the future cruelly lied to the two anxious lawyers his crafty heart told him that he was safe. "Madeleine is loyal to the death," he exulted. "She will guard the secret with her life." And he then thought of Hiram Bashford far away, with the fierce resentment of a victor upon even terms. "Damn his lordship's airs. I would like him now to see her head on my bosom. I have won the prize that he would have had his own." But in no period of his remarkably successful career was Counselor Seaton Bennett as agile in his duties, as calmly unconcerned in his daily demeanor, as when he hugged to his soul the cowardly triumph of his studied meanness. "She is mine at last, for she dare not tell the story of our summer life." And he heedlessly forgot in his joy, standing on the threshold of his opening political career, the sage injunctions of his practical friend Minnie Walton.

A strange viewless demon of good luck seemed to walk at the side of that rising luminary, Mr. Seaton Bennett. For the return of Bodley had relieved him of any detailed connection with the interests of the absent chief, whose "High Joint" already projected itself for six long months more of easy conference and gastronomic rumination at Brussels. Two days after the return of Counselor Bodley he called Bennett to him with an anxious face. "Here, I am desperately bothered, Seaton," said the genial Bodley. "Bashford cables me to send one of our firm down to join Jarvis and Thorn in pressing that Delaware suit against that brute, Shearer. They are now forcing the trial on. Bashford's absence is a godsend to the defendant. Now, Blake and myself have our hands full. We can

get along with Withers here. You had better go up and see Miss Ware, get all the papers and then take a run down to New Castle. Stay there and help Jarvis to get a judgment against that sneaking scoundrel. If you say yes, I cable to Bashford, and I know that he will feel his interests safe in your hands."

Bennett bowed, accepting the compliment in silence. "All right," cheerily cried the relieved senior. "I'll cable to Hiram. Give them a good twist down there, and telegraph to me for any money or other help you may need. Can you go to-day? I will send a dispatch to Jarvis." And so it fell out that Seaton Bennett's heart was light as he left the office, for Bodley's last remark was, "I have telegraphed to Mrs. Bradford, the old housekeeper, to come over here and take Miss Ware down later. She is our only witness, and she will make her headquarters at the Hall. Jarvis will put you up with his own family."

Bennett's mind was in a whirl as he dashed away up-town. "There's one thing certain," he mused. "This quest will cover and explain any apparent intimacy of the coming months." A victor enforcing the acknowledgment of a suddenly awakened love from the woman he had stalked in secret, the harvest was yet to reap. But he already dreamed of the fair woman wandering in her lovely bowers by the Delaware with the sunshine of a new passion, the magic of first love shining in her face.

Seated alone in her darkened rooms Madeleine Ware awaited his coming with a wildly throbbing heart. Her lover never knew the sacred contents of the two letters which had aroused the storm of feeling that had left her helpless in Bennett's hands. For with a guilty self-accusation which she did not altogether understand, she had destroyed every vestige of Hiram Bashford's last pleading appeal and of Mrs. Florence Renwick's burning words, the words which had rent her heart. The great lawyer, his country's representative, was chafing sorely under the enforced delay of months. His lonely heart sought out Madeleine, turning toward

her there, fighting the world alone, as the needle swings to the Pole. Bashford only feared that some personal clumsiness had ruined his influence over the woman he adored. His great heart was still shaken in a vague unrest and forebodings of the very worst came to unman him with their gloomy shadows. "Alone in a great city, my poor, blind darling," he murmured, as he went away to seek counsel of Flossie Renwick and her keen-witted spouse. It had been very easy for the little Pennsylvanian princess to see the gaping wound in Bashford's heart. Her pen flew nervously over the paper as she indited her first and last appeal to Madeleine Ware—an appeal to love, tenderness and gratitude.

"Do you not see, darling," she wrote, "that Bashford has given you all the loyal support of his wisdom, as well as the indulgent tenderness of his great heart? He has opened your practical career to you. He has saved your dear old home from the stranger—he is now championing you against that villain, Shearer. And whatever cloud has come between you, you have simply broken his heart. He has begged you to pause a season in the mad onward race which is wrecking your health and burning your mind out in a fever. It is not by a wild escalade—a frenzied dash—that you will conquer and win a lasting fame. I can only see in my newer life, at a distance, that you have denied him all; that he mistakes your proud independence for aversion and that you will only wreck your life and embitter his. He has told me all, and he asks nothing but that you will not make your ambition the goad to drive you to some future despair. I burn to be with you, and I implore you to go to Ware Hall and await his return. You may not see, but we do, that without Hiram Bashford's helping hand you could not remain a single month in your anomalous social situation." Her last clause had opened the door to a terrible temptation. "I am no prophet, nor the daughter of a prophet, but I can see, in my own life, the strangely changed feelings of a woman who loves and is be-

loved. The power of love is beyond all the sneers of the social agnostic. If you will devote yourself to the law, you should marry some man of kindred pursuits and follow on the career jointly with him. For every woman's nature is two-sided, and heart and soul demand the satisfaction of nature, as well as the shadowy triumph of ambition. Love will wreck you yet, if you do not remember that you are, after all, only a woman."

The modern Portia had torn that letter to fragments. Its words were without seeming weight, but she was simply bewildered. Day by day in this one summer, she had left the gates ajar and it was Seaton Bennett's passion which overpowered her in her one hour of weakness. She found herself now trembling in the throes of a new emotion, and she dared not ask herself how far she now ruled her own future. For she knew that she had given herself up to his guidance without reservation. And she had been surprised into the admission of a love whose tide had silently risen around her, with her eyes fixed afar upon other things. "I must conceal this from Bashford, from Flossie," she instinctively cried, and the merest ray of light in her troubled heart would have shown her the duty not to linger longer in a situation rapidly becoming a false one.

And so, she was left as wax in her lover's hands. When he came, his eyes burning with a secret triumph, she bowed her head humbly as he said, "We must keep our secret from all. We will arrange our whole plan of action at New Castle. For I must not lose my hard-earned standing here. You must not be compromised. I think I see the way, in a year, to take you out into the Golden West, where we can move upward, hand in hand." And with her lover at her side, the fair woman never dreamed that she had thrown away the empire of her own future, that she already wore the links which bind, golden links, yet a chain, and that the scepter of her soul had passed into the hands of another. For she was only one of Eve's family, and love had stolen upon her like a thief in the night.

Seaton Bennett was overjoyed at his easy mastery of the Delaware beauty. As he stepped upon the ferry boat to take the train he was startled at a telegram from his secret political agent, the great Doolan.

"A big deal for you in sight. See me as soon as you can. Most important."

The departing lawyer could only telegraph:

"Called away for three weeks; will write. Come at once to you on my return. Address New Castle, Delaware."

"It seems everything is going my way," he cheerfully reflected, as the boat neared Hoboken. "But what the devil can I do with Madeleine for this next year?" The words of Red Mike had recalled to him the one ambition of his life—the oath to himself to ride into Congress on the back of the Tiger. And once again, he swore to himself that he would "get there." And for the moment he forgot the beautiful woman whom he had left behind him, sobbing alone, the loving one who feared to ask herself if it was joy or sorrow that ruled her strangely discovered heart. For Madeleine Ware now felt the thrill of love, and she could not answer whither the future would lead her. Perhaps she would wander away, far away, in new scenes, among stranger faces, but Love had entangled her in the meshes of his net, and she fondly whispered, "He will be at my side. He is so noble, so tender, so true."

The crisis of his life found Seaton Bennett strangely unprepared for independent action. He had only a day to take a furtive look at the departed glories of Ware Hall. For the trial was coming on, and a keen professional pride urged him to do his best to bring Robert Shearer to bay. Already Mrs. Bradford was on her way to escort the orphaned girl to face her plunderer in open court. Counselor Jarvis marveled at the feverish energy with which Bennett plunged into the details of the cause célèbre. "We shall beat them," Jarvis wrote to the anxious Bodley, "for Bennett is really a wonder. He already has every thread of the case picked up and knotted."

Neither of the seniors knew the cool weighing of possibilities going on in the young advocate's mind. "There's over a hundred thousand dollars in this case. If we win, I might afford to marry Madeleine. This money backing would certainly make my election sure, and also back me through a couple of terms at Washington. After that, I will be well on my feet." Bennett had the leisure to think the whole situation over and he was goaded on to action by the significant scrawl of Red Mike, which followed him to the banks of the Delaware.

"What I've to say is not for pen and ink, and it will keep for your return. Come to me as soon as ye can, for the door stands open for ye to go in next year."

"I wonder what his plan can be?" mused the young legal champion, as he fretted at the railway station awaiting the arrival of Miss Madeleine Ware. But all the air castles of congressional model vanished as he sprang to meet the beautiful woman who turned to him on the eve of the battle for her rights. The light in her eyes shone for him alone, and he saw, too, in her proud self-possession that their secret was safe. "Bashford can never break down her serene and steadfast calm. I can do what I wish to with her," he gloated, "for she believes in me." With knightly courtesy Bennett escorted Madeleine to the door of her old home. He would not even enter. "The trial is on to-morrow," he said, "and Jarvis depends entirely on me." The intimacy of the summer had given Bennett a wonderful familiarity with the whole intrigue of the Kaolin Company, for Madeleine had supplied the gaps where Jarvis had harked back on the winding way of the false friend. The lover's voice thrilled in all the intensity of a restrained passion as he whispered, "Here, here, I can tell you all our future, here in the shadow of your old home, but only after we have beaten this robber."

The days of the drawn-out trial only brought the two secret lovers nearer together. There was pride and love mingled in the rapture which filled Madeleine Ware's soul as she saw her old enemy humbled, brought to his

neers and disgraced before all men by the merciless cross-examination of her champion. The country side had flocked to hear the final arguments, and under the eyes of the woman he loved Seaton Bennett touched the very highest point of his forensic powers. He battled for the fortune, which could send him to Congress, under the eyes of the awakened beauty whose eyes followed him in speechless tenderness as his voice rose and fell in the sweep of his splendid eloquence. "A masterly effort," cried the delighted Jarvis, as Seaton Bennett concluded, and the murmur of the assembled bar confirmed that verdict. Bennett laughingly waved away the dozen outstretched hands and strode to where the veiled beauty sat, thrilling in ecstasy to see her lover, strong, peerless, triumphant.

"I have done my very best for you," he simply said, as her eyes shone on him with a strange liquid light. "My own darling," was the whisper which reached his ears alone, as her little hand trembled in his grasp. Three days later Seaton Bennett paced his room in deep thought, long after the happy circle at Squire Jarvis' fireside had broken up. A congratulatory cablegram lay open on the table, with several similar telegrams from New York. The press had characterized his conduct of the case as "magnificent," and Blake and Bodley supplemented Hiram Bashford's message from over the sea.

"I can walk alone now, gentlemen. I do not need either cane or crutch," he cried, apostrophizing the absent. And a definite plan matured itself in his mind. It had been to him a subtle stimulus giving light to his brain and pointing his words with flame. The nearness of that beautiful woman to whose every motion his body moved in unconscious sympathy. The pent-up passion of his ardent nature was a maddening intoxication and he moved as in a dream. For, in her gracious self-surrender, Madeleine Ware leaned upon him now in a proud humility. She was the cold and haughty Minerva no longer, but only a Venus, clinging, glowing, rapturous and tender and loving—her whole

nature revealed itself in adoring the man whom she had set up as the god of her fresh young life. No cold theory seemed to stand between them now. No abstract propositions of woman's place in life, her ambitions lay dormant, for she had crowned him her king of men, and at his side she only sighed to rule over his heart in the gentle submission of his love. This was the woman lawyer's self-elected fate.

It was a time of roses for them both, and the beautiful gardens of the old manor wooed them now to the retirement where the fragrant flowers nodded their welcome home to the orphan. These were the golden, happy days, these days of first love. For she shyly told him all, and he learned all the depths of her tenderness from her lips, crimson with the glowing flush of love. Bennett, too, had been swept away from all the anchored prudence of his own egoistic code. When he murmured to her, "Darling, trust me all in all. You must be mine, and only as my wife can you rightly guard our double secret. Then, in a year, I will lead you out of the peopled wilderness of New York to our own home in the bright West, but we will come back here one day and you shall reign again queen of the old manor. For, together, nothing will be denied to us." The ardent lover had conned every chance entering into the game of cross purposes. "Bashford may even give her this place," he mused. "He may not, but if I am two sessions in Congress, the way to it will be easy. At any rate, this hundred thousand dollars and more will be surely hers and it will be my financial salvation. I can afford to risk it." He tried to weigh every single objection with a due sense of his enhanced professional valuation, but the tide of restrained passion swept all these trifling barriers away. "I will not lose her," he cried, and then the way seemed clear enough.

There was a period of enforced delay until the judgment could be entered and the records of the case made up. The delighted Jarvis believed Mr. Seaton Bennett to have departed for a little run to New York in the

interval, for the judgment proceedings would occupy a week or more. Messrs. Blake and Bodley forwarded Seaton Bennett's mail as directed "to Washington," and yet, the few days of the young champion's absence from New Castle were spent at Camden, New Jersey. It was for but a few brief hours that Miss Madeleine Ware tarried at that uninteresting town, when Mrs. Bradford had seen her depart to spend a short time at Wilmington "upon some legal business." It was a very matter of fact country justice of the peace who married the noble looking lovers who sought his official aid at the little country hamlet of Magnolia.

Madeleine Ware was musing in a dream as she sat gazing out of the windows of a quaint country inn, where the one set of best parlors wooed her in vain with their faded colonial furnishings. She had not been proof against the vehement pleadings of the man who had carried her cause on to victory.

She was now a wife. It seemed as if the current of her life was swiftly bounding on between unknown banks and there were "no lights to guide." "It is the only honorable way for us to carry this secret, my darling," Bennett had urged. "Think of your own delicate position as regards Hiram Bashford and my obligations to all these gentlemen, my rich partners." And so she had yielded to this marriage, which seemed even to her, to be unduly shadowed in mystery. While she waited, with a beating heart, for the return of her husband, the groom had quickly returned to the anxious village magistrate. The liberal fee which astonished the sleepy "squire" was accompanied with a slip bearing the names of "Seaford Benton" and "Margaret Wall." The entries were duly made, and the bridegroom eagerly retraced his steps. "No one can ferret out our little marriage masquerade," he mused, "and it gives me a little command of the situation."

"The voice that breathed o'er Eden" was no sweeter than the spell of Love's dream which wrapped the happy wife in its iris folds, and not a shade was on her fair brow as she went back alone to the old Hall, whose

every shadow seemed to cling to her in a mute benediction as she dwelt in the present which was so passing fair. Seaton Bennett's open return to New Castle two days later was only after a day spent in wandering hand in hand with the enraptured Portia through the scenes of her girlhood.

"I miss nothing of the old grandeur, Seaton," the happy woman whispered. "for all the world is my home, while you are by my side."

And the man, though devoured by his ambitions, was so swayed by the sweetness of the love which had flashed its golden light into his dark heart, that he now believed himself to be true. And in this loving, happy dream, they parted, only to meet again in the hidden mystery of their now sacred secret.

Seaton Bennett followed Counselor Jarvis listlessly into his private study when the old practitioner had found time to capture the returning lion of the hour. "I have a very unwelcome disclosure to make to you, Mr. Bennett," said the old lawyer, as he settled himself gravely. They were now shut off from all possible interruption. "It will make no difference to you, for this case is the crowning honor of your life. It is the making of your future. But, I cannot find the heart to send the news to Bashford, for it will pain and enrage him beyond measure."

"What's wrong?" cried Bennett, with a sudden access of gloomy misgivings. "Speak out, man. I am no baby." His voice had a strangely harsh ring, as he gripped a ruler in his nervous hands.

"I am sorry to say," timidly said Jarvis, "that Robert Shearer was quietly married to the only daughter of the president of the bank in Maryland a few months ago, and I have learned that all of Shearer's bank stock was transferred some time ago to that gentleman 'for a valuable consideration.' The couple came back in your absence and have secretly departed for a year's travel in Europe."

Seaton Bennett sprang to his feet, with blazing eyes, as he cast away the fragments of the ruler, which had

snapped in his hands. "The damned scoundrel!" he yelled. "Then, Miss Ware's judgment is not worth the paper it is written on."

"I am afraid so," sadly said Jarvis, "for Shearer has resigned his place in the bank. Of course, the father-in-law will screen him, and Shearer has so saved one fortune and gained another. I am sorry for Miss Ware, as it leaves her practically penniless. I know that she counted upon this. I dare not break this bad news to her. You must." The old man sank back exhausted.

"I'll do nothing of the kind," sternly said Bennett, glancing at his watch. "I have a half hour to catch the train. I will go to New York and see what I can do to stop this infernal robbery. Do you drive down and tell this to Miss Ware. It is your place, not mine," and Bennett traced a few lines with flying fingers. "There, give her that. It will explain my absence. I would not have her think that I have deserted her. But I must see Bodley, and see him at once."

Before the old lawyer's phaeton had drawn up at Ware Hall, Seaton Bennett was twenty-five miles away on his voyage to New York. The glow of proud happiness had vanished from his heart and his brow was black as he cast up his mental reckoning in a secluded corner of the car. "I have made a fool of myself," he grimly said. "This girl is now tied to me for life, and a pauper. For old Bashford will roar like a bull of Bashan when he discovers our marriage. And the cast-off lover will never give her a cent now." He glared back at the Delaware. "It's all gone—the Hall, the money, and—my seat in Congress." A sudden thought recalled him. "I'll see 'Red Mike' at once. Perhaps I can win Madeleine over to have the Chief back my congressional campaign. For I have bound myself hand and foot. I was a fool, a fool," he reiterated. "I'll let Bodley run this farce down here now, and he can send the news himself."

Seaton Bennett, the bridegroom of a few stolen days of secret commune, never gave a thought to the woman who sat bowed and stunned before the blow dealt in

his usual gentleness of manner by the old lawyer who was the messenger of sad tidings. "Poor Seaton," she gasped, and she was sadly fearful of the throbbing of her loving heart. "It will be a terrible blow to our future. It promised so fair. It promised so fair." She did not hear the grave outpourings of the old counselor, who vainly strove to reillumine her hopes. For the words of her husband's brief letter had cut her to the heart. The first shadow on the glass. "I am called to New York. Jarvis will tell you all," he curtly wrote. "You had better come on at once and see Bodley. I shall not come back. Meet you there as usual. Safer to burn this." Her eyes were filled with tears as she noted the single initial "S."

There was not a word of tenderness, not a single veiled touch recalling the love which had thrilled their two hearts, now joined forever in the solemn bond of life and love. "Poor Seaton," she whispered, and with a new dignity of sorrow she committed the first missive from the man to whom she had given her last sigh of love, to the red flames, which licked the frail paper into a shriveling mass of ashes. "It is too hard, too bitter to bear," she cried, and when she turned away in the old Hall, shadowed by the sorrows of the past, she sought the room of her happy girlhood in a sorrow which no one dared to break in upon.

All the way homeward the old lawyer was wrapped in a mantle of gloom. "Bennett seemed almost beside himself. It is a rascally piece of business. And yet it is really nothing to him. Poor Madeleine," he murmured. And he vowed in his fatherly heart to write to Hiram Bashford and appeal to his golden heart. "That girl must not suffer. She looked as if she had death in her face."

The excited knots of men gathered in New Castle would have fain mobbed the absent bridegroom who had fled away, like a thief in the night, but the smug Shearer was far away, laughing at pursuit, for his conduct had been based upon "legal lines" carefully drawn.

He knew well that "there is one law for the rich and another for the poor," even in the land of freedom.

Late that night, another bridegroom entered the "palatial establishment" of the renowned Doolan at Long Island City. Bennett had tersely recounted all to Bodley and vigorously "washed his hands of the whole affair." The unwelcome news was following Shearer toward Europe, to be flashed there before him.

"Now, don't fool with me," cried Seaton Bennett, when Red Mike had led him into the remotest sanctum of his gin palace. "What's your scheme? Out with it. I am hungry and tired, and I've come from Delaware to hear you." There was the unaccustomed flush of brandy on the hard, bright, defiant face.

"Well, my boy," jovially said Doolan, "I have fixed it all for your nomination next summer. There's big money needed. I know ye haven't got it. But, I can get it for ye. It's for yourself to say the word." The great manipulator was big with his secret. "I want some of the money. There's nearly a million of it."

"But how can I get it?" growled Bennett, with a growing irritation.

"Why, marry it," guffawed Doolan, and, unmindful of the sudden pallor on Seaton Bennett's face, he ran on with glibness. "She was a mere girl when she married one of the Tweed contractors, and she's a beauty now, and not far from your own age. She has a great desire to be a queen of Tammany, on the inside." He whispered a word or two which left Seaton Bennett white and trembling. "She will meet you half way, an ye're a made man for life. They have spoken of you to her, and this grand trial has made yer fortune. She has the money and she dearly wants to get into Washington society. There was mountains of money made in the Park jobbing and the City Hall, and it's there for you, with a fine woman to back it, and to open the door of Congress for you. I'll navigate the thing to success, but I want fifty thousand the day ye're elected. It's the one chance of a lifetime."

"Let me—let me think it over," muttered Seaton Ben-

nett, as he staggered out into the obscurity of the night. The darkness of the streets was its friendly curtain. For his tell-tale face might have betrayed him. It was a maddening juncture.

"I have been a fool, a damned fool, and ruined myself forever," he faltered as he strode along unheeding. "Why did I not come over and see this smart fellow when he bade me? It is now too late." And as he wandered along, a busy devil at his side whispered in the dark, "Not too late, not too late. I know a way." The damp of night was chill on his brow when he strode back and joined his anxious go-between. "Tell me all," he cried, with forced gaiety. "We will see what we can do. I was quite worn out with that trial. I'm feeling better now."

"Ye'll be right in a jiffy," said the overjoyed Doolan, as he rang for a bottle of Pommery. "We'll drink the health of the bride to be." And the devil danced in Seaton Bennett's heart, as the wine gave the tempted man a false courage.

Far away that night Madeleine Bennett had sobbed herself to sleep and was happy at last in dreaming now that they were wandering together in their fool's Paradise of a day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE YOKE OF TAMMANY.

Counselor Bodley was greatly astounded at the reserve manifested by the brilliant junior as to the defeat of the money recovery in Delaware by Robert Shearer's cowardly evasion. Bennett had quietly dropped into the office business with his accustomed energy and simply replied "What can I do? I won your law case for you, but this sneak has baffled us at the last."

Bodley himself was sorely bothered now, for he was the recipient of several cablegrams which indicated the rage and disappointment of Hiram Bashford. "Where is Miss Ware?" anxiously demanded Bodley a week after Bennett's return. "I have a cablegram for her, and Jarvis telegraphs to me that she left New Castle shortly after you did."

"Better wire to Atwater, Mrs. Renwick's brother," said Bennett, in some little sudden confusion. "I believe that she thought of visiting Mrs. Hugh for a few days."

It proved so to be, and Seaton Bennett felt very safe in his well judged precaution that no letters should be interchanged between them. "It is hard, my darling," he had gravely said, "but it is our only salvation. Letters, always letters, give away the dread secrets of life, the fatal over-confidence of lovers leads them on to their final destruction. When you come back, I must be more than circumspect until we have passed the argus eyes of Bashford on his return. After that a growing general intimacy can then lead us up to the happy day when I shall take you away forever out of their den."

And so in the Pennsylvanian hills, Madeleine Bennett received the indignant outpouring of the absent chief's heart. The last touch of misfortune had softened his rugged heart. He wrote with friendly vehemence. "I am coming home, Madeleine, to be again your protector of old. I can be a father to you now, and, my dear child, you must not hold me at arms' length. For I shall find out some way to contribute to your happiness, and I must be allowed to make this loss up to you. If the world misunderstands me, certainly you will not. And, as for the Hall, I shall leave it to you, in your own name. Now, I shall not see you till Florence Renwick has been with you, and I beg you to let her be my ambassadress. This will be our little secret, known only by our little trinity."

"How he loves me. How he has loved me," mused

Madeleine Bennett, and, with a sudden alarm, she saw that the control of her life had drifted away from her. For she had even now a secret from the chosen husband of her heart, as well as one to hide from Florence and the great counselor. Madeleine Bennett gazed at her ringless wedding finger, and those "maimed rites" of her marriage returned to vex and annoy her. For the coarse functionary had not even wished her Godspeed and not a woman stood by her in the touching moment when she had linked herself forever to the aspiring, audacious lawyer. And so in her wistful eyes there was the shadow already of a coming grief. Her fine, noble soul spurned all concealment and double dealing. Hand in hand, she would have gone out openly with him, penniless, to face the world and to honor him above all men. In vain Hugh Atwater and his cheery wife sought to lift her up into the happy present, for they feared now that she was only walking with the shadows and sorrows of the past. It seemed as if there was a sad relief when she once more sought the great city, an unacknowledged wife, to be again "a stranger within its gates."

Seaton Bennett, too, had been mindful of the depressing effect of the enforced separation upon the woman he had hurried into matrimony, and while he dared not go to receive her openly, he had made her rooms a bower of floral loveliness. There was all the tenderness in their meeting which the dangers lurking around them would permit. Seaton Bennett was a marvelous actor in a social drama, whose rapidly thickening plot now embraced many collateral characters and another leading lady. He had neatly arranged to be absent on the first day of Miss Ware's reappearance at the office. "Bodley can exhaust the subject of Robert Shearer's Fabian victory, and I will not be exposed to the prying eyes of the office force." He had so reasoned, and rightly. Moreover, he limited his stay with the lonely wife on the evening of her return to the usual "visite de ceremonie," and even that was broken in upon by several "guardian angels" of the

"model apartment," including the sagacious Mrs. Minnie Walton. But the dignified bearing of the two principals in the secret marriage was an armor of proof to these curious eyes. The sequel to the "cause célèbre" was a matter of public news and the journalists of several states had "scorched" that recreant friend and laggard bridegroom, Shearer. He was safe now in far lands, however.

Seaton Bennett gave to the ostensible Miss Ware at parting a little folded slip of paper with an address card. "Call in at Benedicts, on your way to the office to-morrow," he whispered. It was after a night of conflicting emotions that the pale-faced bride sought the legal fortress which she had left as a free woman in the high hopes of triumph. She had returned in a real defeat to be now the guardian of a double secret, an unrecognized wife, and her voice trembled as she was made the target of the noisy sympathy of the fussy Bodley.

She soon sat alone in her haven of refuge—that retreat designed by the absent chief, to be proof against all the wiles of her foes, and her eyes roved hopelessly around the embattled books. The woman's heart was as lead within her. Her brilliant husband was absent, but at her desk she recalled with a sinking heart the hasty wooing which had made her another woman. It now seemed like the "baseless fabric of a dream."

But it was all too true. And, after escaping from a conference over Bashford's voluminous instructions to Bodley, she sat there still gloved and with her face covered by the friendly shadows of her veil. She had no heart for her work. True, on the finger of her left hand where a wedding ring should have gleamed, there sparkled a magnificent square sapphire, with two superb old Indian diamonds of the same peculiar cutting. It was the substitute for that plain golden band which Seaton Bennett should have placed there on the day of their obscure wedding. And yet she felt a cowardly shrinking at the heart when she reflected that she dared not remove her glove lest some one of the

fifty pairs of prying eyes should query, "Whose token?"

And every moment the clock ticking away told her now that the current of the life blood had taken a new direction. She could not analyze her feelings, but she felt that she was Madeleine Ware no longer. The high-spirited modern Portia was as meek as her prototype of the play, when Bassanio, in choosing the leaden casket, leaped at once to the mastery of the woman decreed by fate to be his very own. She trifled at her desk for an hour and then left the office, knowing that the spirit which had led her on alone to brave lonely toil and mental fatigue was broken forever. There was a hidden fever in her blood throbbing, "No other will but his." Ah, beautiful, trusting neophyte! She passively resigned herself to bonds which she had riveted upon her own helpless hands and iron bands which cramped the noble, womanly heart. One frightened glance into her dark future told her that she must perforce go on and lead the double life. For to justify herself in any apparent false position would be but to betray the man whom she loved with all the intensity of her true heart. Even the stimulating love of Flossie Renwick she must hold at arm's length now. She looked forward with a strange fear to meeting the clear eyes of the gallant little friend of her vanished girlhood days.

And, Bashford? She rose and left the office, as she felt that she dare not tell the self-constituted champion that she had poured out the wine of her blameless life already. "I may not be able to be here for some days," she faltered to the astonished Bodley, who quickly sought out Blake to commune with that jovial fisherman. "This thing has broken her spirit," sadly moaned the kind-hearted senior.

"Yes, she takes it devilish hard, poor girl," sympathized Blake. "It is a rough old world that we navigate in nowadays," he sighed, "and the 'square deal' is a thing of the past. But, I hope that Bashford will make it all right."

There was that in the girl's yearning heart which Bashford could never make all right! For she was beginning to see that all her toilsome plowing and planting, her years of lonely self-devotion, had only brought to her an empty harvest of tares. In the proud isolation of her maidenhood, a swift Atalanta of the mind, she had outstripped her sisters, sitting waiting with idly folded hands for their fate in marriage. And now, she knew that her own legal identity was merged in that of another, all the fair ambitions of her girlish days were clouded, and her individual success as an independent lawyer was a thing of the past. And, as she sought her tarrying place, not even a home, for her right abode was elsewhere, this strong woman, yearning toward the right, knew that she was as weak as the weakest, only a woman, and "a stranger within the gates" of Minerva's temple. It came to her then how little of our own lives we really rule, at the last, and she then felt the swelling heart in her bosom rise in a silent appeal to the mother she had never known, and the dear father whom she had lost. For she had thoughtlessly barred the door upon honest Bashford and loyal Florence Renwick. She had feared, also, to meet staunch Hugh Atwater's inquiring eyes, and even Counselor Jarvis' tender sympathy galled her. Her rooms, silent and peopled with dreams, were unbearable. She wandered out in the afternoon and aimlessly sought a modest shop where a working jeweler had often executed her trifling behests. "Ah, this is really a superb ring," murmured the man who noted her little order. He gazed at the order book when she had swept away in an abashed silence.

"S. B. to M. W. Oct. 13, 1891," he read off the book. "An unlucky number! Poor girl! I wonder, is it the end of the beginning—or the beginning of the end!" For he had also noted the wistful sorrow of her eyes. "There is something wrong," the young man sighed, for he had himself seen many hesitating women pausing on the road in life with an imploring finger on their pallid lips! It had been a girlish fancy of the

shadow wife to have the letters of that conquering name always before her eyes—and before a week was over she again visited the dusky little shop and ordered a plain gold band, with the same initials! “I need a guard ring!” she murmured, and then fled away in a sudden confusion.

For the stately modern Portia was a woman fond and blind after all, and she feared now the sound of her own voice!

“We must be very prudent for a week or so!” hastily whispered Mr. Seaton Bennett, as he sought her presence in a favorable moment, when the girl had listlessly taken up her office work again. Her first duties—an unwelcome labor of necessarily continued deception—had been to pen evasive letters to Hiram Bashford, and to the returning Mrs. Renwick! The destruction of several sets of letters had not prevented the two dispatched from being merely lame attempts at cold subterfuge! The “usual ease” of the “go as you please” woman in shifty lying, was no heritage of her increasing troubles! For she—lonely and great-hearted—could suffer, but she could not lie!

The brow of Mr. Seaton Bennett was also contracted now in the faintly drawn horseshoe, which told of the bearing of a daily burden, and all the strain of an internal conflict! His shoulders were broad, but the yoke of Tammany rested upon them now! It was a tribute to the powers of persuasion possessed by the adroit Doolan, that the busy devil was tugging away continually now at Seaton Bennett’s wavering heart! He was also the slave of a master whose influence daily increased! For, “Red Mike” was no despicable Mephistopheles! An acute judge of men, as well as of “light flesh and corrupt blood,” in his dark eyrie, he had learned wondrous lessons of the vulnerability of human nature when taken unawares! The easy relaxation of a “political joint” had given him unusual chances to use his ferret eyes! He was “eager to take responsibility,” and also to oblige a friend! There were very few of the bright plumaged political birds

who wandered into his "turkey trap" who could ever retrace their steps! "When ye've got a man's head turned, ye must always keep following him up!" was his sage advice to Patsey Casey, his head bar-keeper and coming successor. For a knife thrust or a pistol ball might at any time suddenly remove "Red Mike" to "another sphere of usefulness!" It was a wild, exciting life, this open and hidden intrigue in the tawdry splendors of His Spiritual Domain! He had craftily inflamed to the utmost the mad ambitions of Seaton Bennett's daring mind! Thwarted in his "reach out" for the lost hundred thousand, saddled with an unacknowledged wife, fearing Bashford's resentment, should the marriage intrigue be discovered—Bennett had decided to stay aloof for awhile from the secret bride whom he had so passionately wooed! "It will not help her, and it can do me no good!" he mused—"and I must 'make this calling and election sure!' If I make a hit in Congress and 'succeed myself,' there are a thousand ways of reaching money at Washington!"

But the sly schemer already knew now that he must play a deadly secret game to reach Congress, and outwit both the Tammany chiefs and his dangerous mentor, "Red Mike!" To reach the money, after he "reached Congress," was an easy matter. For the sands of the river of Pactolus are ever gold-bearing—and he had an abiding faith in the productiveness of trusts! Sugar trusts, cotton trusts, steel and iron hidden trusts, armor-making trusts, whisky trusts, ship building trusts—and all forms of that pious fraud branded on our national coins, "In God we trust"—for that, was the only unproductive American trust—a trust in "futures!" Mr. Seaton Bennett was trusting in the present to evolve a golden future, and his clear gray eyes did not yet seek to pierce the mist "over the river!" He had dissembled with "Red Mike," and carefully "pumped" that rubicund Figaro upon the whole details of the relict of the man who had trained with the Honorable William M. Tweed! Bennett had seen the Americus Club in its pride of power, disporting at

Long Branch under the tutelage of the great "Boss!" He remembered the diamond-set Tiger badges—the glories of the resplendent band-leader—the high tide of greenbacks, in those halcyon days when Colonel Jim Fisk's steamers and Helmbold's triumphant chariot dazzled the diamond-decked daughters of Eve, crowding to see the fleet-footed Longfellow and Harry Bassett race for hundreds of thousands!

It was a time of light loves—of lightly won hearts, held more lightly still; of lightly popping corks and a light hand on the reins, in the gallop to the devil! But, in the proposed succession to the garnered profits of one of the men of might, in these same halcyon days, Seaton Bennett felt like going a little slow! He wished to assure himself that the "widow's mite" was there; that she was reasonably fair to view; and, also, in a respectable state of preservation. He remembered the reverse of the Tweed picture! The flight of the birds of prey to the four corners of the earth, and the sad hour when Tweed—old, heartbroken and humble—was led into the Tombs as a witness in convict stripes, led by insolent jailers, and the awe-inspiring "horrid example," to a gaping crowd on Centre Street. For the urchins looked over the head of the disgraced captain whose picture had been turned to the wall, to see above him there in golden letters carved on the Egyptian plinths, "Rebuilt under the direction of the Honorable William M. Tweed, President of the Board of Public Works!" And too well Bennett knew that the heartbroken man had outlasted the inscription on the everlasting flint! For they had torn away the badge of a betrayed public trust, and of a saddening private shame!

On the very day when lonely Madeleine Bennett had sought the poor shelter of her "model apartment," the flimsy pretext of a legal conference, brought Seaton Bennett for the first time into the presence of the fair woman who so keenly watched over the heaped-up million saved for her from the wreck of the Tweed ring! The residence of the vivacious widow on Mur-

ray Hill was soberly staid in its substantial elegance. And there Mrs. Edgar Martyn forgot that she was once the spouse of Mr. Patrick Edward Martin, an aspiring and conspiring plumber! The judicious escort of two socially acceptable gentlemen who were treading the Tammany wine press, gave the air of an embassy to this first visit! Seaton Bennett was astonished to notice the ease with which these pieces of human chess slid along the board, under Red Mike's directing finger. It was no brute cunning—no assumption—but the keenest correctness of logical good judgment and "horse sense" which gave "Red Mike" Doolan an ascendancy over men a thousand times his superior! His unflinching staunchness as a "man of his word in good and evil repute" proved him that *rara avis*, "the honest man!" For had not Simon Cameron, a whilom Secretary of War and the Duke of Pennsylvania, pithily defined "an honest man" to be a fellow who stayed "bought," when you had bought him once?

And the two presentable Manhattanites who conveyed the legal hero of New Castle up to Mrs. Edgar Martyn's "castella" on Murray Hill had gently sounded his praises in advance, a brace of not guileless John the Baptists, making his way smooth! They were both involved in many schemes of the energetic Doolan, and were also splendid public representatives of that ramified influence which, stretching out from Tammany Hall, spread its filaments into Wakely's, "Red Mike" Doolan's and countless other "joints," as well as the palatial café of the Hoffman, and "Spencer's Rest," at Saratoga. Seaton Bennett's heart was beating wildly as he crossed the threshold of the Murray Hill parlors of this spider fair to view! He was trying to trick his wily mentor, and to muzzle the Tiger—in themselves both dangerous and delicate operations! He well knew that the visit was the prelude to a game of hearts, and his head was clear, for he had curbed the affections which were supposed to be about to undergo a "forcing process!" A coward for once, he put away the haunting vision of beautiful Madeleine

Ware, as he bowed low in his introduction to the relict of the golden plumber! A brief glance at the double drawing rooms had told him that this was the home of generous luxury and all that surface refinement which is open to the possessors of a full purse! For, with American adaptability, what native woman cannot rise socially when gifted with youth, beauty, wit and wealth? The rivers of Abana and Pharphar are mere rills compared to the bright social baptism of the flooded wisdom of Ward McAllister's lectures, the society journals, and the hand books which give infallible recipes both for the removal of freckles and the etiquette of the Court of St. James! The keen-eyed young lawyer saw in the inspiring young "demi-brunette" (see society reporter's manual), a woman who had both beauty and "go" in her composition! It was fortunate that Seaton Bennett's distinguished manners carried him over the "mauvais quatre d'heure" with nervy coolness. For, the woman who was about to play Aspasia to his role of Pericles was as justly mentally balanced a coquette as ever "sized a man up," to use the vernacular. Bennett knew not that the fortunate demise of the golden plumber, ere the sword of Damocles could smite "the back of his neck," had left the youthful lady free to travel abroad, and, by polish and social attrition, attain the surface gloss of the Four Hundred! A mere girl when her plumber had "climbed the golden stair," she was even now a provokingly pretty unanswered conundrum! For the age of thirty would be as just an estimate as thirty-five, with a strong leaning to the first! If Seaton Bennett's decorous semi-professional attitude of the "visiting lawyer" who was "ready to oblige" was well chosen, it was no more fortunate than the gentle dignity of "the woman of property" who bowed to all the cares of the "golden yoke!"

With well studied preoccupation the two statesmen withdrew, leaving the two artless lovers of the future together, and hied themselves away to that red brick fort with liver-colored trimmings, where the homely

opera of Signor Antonius Pastorius divides the great five-story building with the "Children of Light!" And there, above, Tamanend, the spent bow in his left hand, his right outstretched, stands with his furred mantle and keeps an eye on men and things in Gotham. Above him, the proud legend over his niche, "Tammany Society—1789-1867"—tells of many generations of public reformers and political rebels overthrown. The great internal hall, the cave of the Tiger, is paved with the bones of the bold victims whose scalps have been first taken by Tamanend—or Tammany—a wise old Delaware chief with a remarkably "horizontal head!" In the little council room, a Tweed, an Honest John Kelly, and, greater than all, an autocratic Sphinx Croker, have "ruled the roast," with watchful eyes upon the division of the political tid-bits! The Tiger's jungle was now familiar ground to the rising lawyer, Seaton Bennett, who basked in the maternal smile of that femininely capricious animal, the Tiger! Bennett was secretly astonished at the cool self-possession with which Mrs. Edgar Martyn led and turned the rippling tide of their first half hour's social communion. In vain did the club man try to discern a single break in her manners, or the faintest evidence of "gaucherie." There was nothing suggestive of the golden plumber in the "spoil of the Orient and Ind" judiciously scattered around! Moreover, the quick-witted relict of the man who had obligingly sought the golden shore had set up an auspicious ancestry of colonial worthies, who smiled down from properly tarnished "old gold" frames upon choice revolutionary bric-a-brac, judiciously purveyed by the departed plumber's useful cash! While Bennett was taking this mental inventory, the vivacious young widow had furtively given him a cursory examination. She looked him squarely in the eyes and then, mentally ejaculated: "He will do! He is the very man I want!" "It looks all right!" mused Seaton Bennett, as he carefully followed the incisive instructions of the rich stranger client as to some trifling property matters! He well knew just when to

make his graceful adieux! A smile faintly shone out on his face, as, with a backward glance, he observed the would-be queen of Tammany gazing after his own retreating form. And before many weeks passed, spurred on by his goading ambition, gently goaded by "Red Mike," he had at last found the "way in," as well as "the way out." He had returned often, and the grave butler secretly hailed him "as the coming man" long before poor Madeleine Ware, with a touch of girlish fancy, had bought the plain golden wedding ring which she wore on a ribbon around her neck! And the man who kept a secret from "Red Mike" had, before the month was over, a darker secret to hide from the poor helpless modern Portia, who now lived only on the stolen interviews, which her husband made judiciously brief! For the Murray Hill widow's dancing eye had learned to "brighten as he came!" And Seaton Bennett, coward at heart, was afraid of the throbbing of his own feverish pulses as he dared to think: "I must find a way to cut loose from that pauper, Madeleine! But, there is Bashford to watch, and all the others!" He was gaunt and hollow-eyed now steeped in his plotting, and the trusting Madeleine Ware only dreamed, as she watched him secretly in the busy office hours, that the fire which consumed, was the hidden love for the wife whom he dared not yet openly take to his bosom. And so, she waited in an infinite tenderness till he should lead her in love far away!

Seaton Bennett ardently longed for the prefix "Honorable" before his name with a consciousness of his own mental superiority! He well knew that the science of politics in New York city was now only a great cooperative business! In the days of his "rapprochement"—under the veiled tutelage of "Red Mike"—he had met the twenty dominating spirits of Tammany at a clam bake and outing, on hunting parties, yachting trips and many other secret junkets! In a way, he was now "free of the town!" He was recognized by all as "a coming man!" For, the public business of New

York city, the imperial metropolis, was two hundred millions of dollars annually, and dwarfed the beggarly sixty millions handled by the United States government when the first gun bellowed a defiance to Uncle Sam at Sumter!

Bennett well knew that the Tammany Society was no longer a "gentleman's club," as in the old days of the Coopers, Hewitts and the Shepherds! The good old days of 1840 to 1855. He recognized the rise of the "boss," the "one man" fetich, in the baleful career of that artful son of Belial, "Fernando Wood," whose milesian slogan, "Fernandywood," even struck terror to great Abraham Lincoln's stout heart! And Tweed, the "old man of the mountain," had also ridden on Tammany Sinbad's galled shoulders. The vigorous reform effort of Honest John Kelly had led down to the days when the stern Croker silently ruled a domain vastly more important than the kingdoms of many crowned heads! And, Bennett also knew that the council of the Star Chamber—the black Star Chamber—followed their leader, no usurping Richard, but a man of marvelous political sagacity, in the discovery of fit men for the ornamental and representative stations in the gift of the purring Tiger of Fourteenth Street! Two months had drifted on in the awkward waiting for Hiram Bashford's return, and the legal mill still ground along with monotonous revolutions. Seaton Bennett carefully studied the changed mental form of his unacknowledged wife. She performed her daily duties in a perfunctory manner, and the "rising and going down of the sun" brought no new light to her lovely eyes—no flush to her pale cheeks. "That splendid woman seems to have lost all her old spirit!" sorrowfully said Bodley one day, to the brilliant junior partner. "I am glad Bashford is coming back soon, and that he has written me of the arrival next week of Mrs. Renwick, the great railroad heiress! I know the lady but slightly, but I shall beg her to take Miss Ware away, at least till Hiram's return! It would be a very good thing to do!" said Seaton Bennett, glancing keen-

ly at Miss Ware's opened door. For, with some intuitive fear, the modern Portia merely beheld herself now as a clerical adjunct to the higher class. Something had been taken away from her which paralyzed all the independent action of her mind, and she was mentally drifting! There was no one to lean on! And so many curious eyes were watching her at the "model apartment!" Madeleine tried to explain to herself her husband's practical avoidance by his fear of the lynx-eyed journalist, Minnie Walton, and of the other busy gossips who were "Mrs. Grundy's bodyguard" near her lonely rooms. And the janitor, too, was a blackmailing Vidocq—his wife, also, was a green-eyed monster of coarse insinuation. And so, holding each other at arm's length—with double secrets between them—the strangely wed lovers mutely gazed across the rooms of the legal fortress at each other with a vague unrest! Madeleine Ware could not lie to herself. "He could easily find a way to be nearer to me, if he cared, or—if he dared!" She had not it yet in her half-awakened heart to accuse him, but she bent like a bruised reed! Seaton Bennett was secretly delighted when Bodley told him that he would go down to the steamer and beg Mrs. Renwick to come at once and bear Madeleine Ware away for a course of social homeopathy. "This is a flush royal of luck," mused Bennett. "This returning bride will keep her down there till the chief returns. He may follow her there, and I presume he will force some property upon her! It will be a good thing for her—if I have to break away from her! And—she will never dare to tell him all! She is not that kind of a woman, anyway! She is game to the last heart beat!"

With a just valuation of himself, the brilliant Tammany recruit had given "Red Mike" and his secret advisers ample time to distantly probe the widow's heart! He had already transacted some confidential affairs for that picturesque personage, and he daily admired the aplomb with which she made her points and guarded her handsome head in the sword play of life!

Bennett also admired her sang froid and, her un-arnished name was another attraction! Only a slip of a girl wife when the golden plumber died, she was spared the insinuation of knowing of his dark schemes—and yet, baby-faced as she was, she had often carried a quarter of a million stitched in her well-fitting corsets—in the days when her husband “was on the fence,” and a “holy terror” possessed her soul! For he was a man who literally followed the terse injunction of Tammany’s laconic chieftain, “to give up nothing!” Pride and self-interest, with the comfortable glow of her delight in being “independently rich,” had been a better armor to the young widow than the vinegary code of all those lank female purists who “believe in virtue, for virtue’s sake!”

Bennett had thoroughly “prospected” this golden field, watched over by the wary, dark eyed widow! He feared that Madeleine’s impractical mental loftiness might cause her to refuse the Hall, or any substantial “tocher” from the absent Bashford. “She has about as much warmth in her soul as an equation in algebra!” he muttered, and, brought to bay at last by “Red Mike,” the would-be Congressman was forced to explain “why he did not go in at once and make the running!”

“See here, Mike,” he sharply said, “I am not going to tie myself hand and foot!” The two rogues were in close conclave at the Palace of Bacchus in Long Island City. “I am now watching some inner intrigues in our own firm. I know just what I am worth to Tammany, and to myself! If I do marry Mrs. Edgar Martyn, it will be only when I am elected and have my certificate of election, uncontested, in my hand. Now, here we are in October, 1891. I cannot be elected before November of next year! Why push things on so rapidly?” “‘There’s many a slip,’ you know, ‘Twixt the cup and the lip,’” said Doolan, calling up a bottle to their aid. Over the foaming wine he remarked; “Ye’re a sly one, Bennett! but ye don’t know politics yet, smart as ye are! Don’t you see that Mrs. Martyn and our friends,” he confidently whispered, “have

talked it all over? You must colonize into the Nineteenth. It's all fixed! It's a district where you are badly wanted—one that we always carry by a clear five thousand—and the little widow will not risk her money carelessly there! Bless you! Why, she is twice as 'fly' as you are in the game of life! Now, will you move in there and 'be handled by your friends?' ”

“How much will she have to put up for the nomination?” huskily said the agitated young lawyer. “Thirty thousand of the good, green stuff is the figure!” answered Doolan. “It's a tidy sum!” “And twenty thousand for me, for the first opening season at Washington!” remarked Bennett. “Yes! Yes! That's understood! Our friends have called for that, in a confidential way!” “Now, what's her real reason to be willing to put up this fifty thousand dollars and give herself along with it?” Bennett was still fearful of some snare, some hidden pitfall! Red Mike laughed heartily. “Ah! My boy! Ye don't know women! Yer handsome face has stood you in good stead often! Perhaps ye've often been a fool to a woman's caprice! In that ye're no better off than the last popular tenor, the one great pugilist, or any moon-eyed piano puncher, with a tangle of uncombed hair and a sixteen-lettered name! But this woman is cut out of different stuff! She wants to show up in Washington, at the White House, on the arm of a man that she's not ashamed of! She wants to hear ye spoutin' there from the member's gallery! And to begin her real life with the 'M. C.' tail to the family kite! For she's buried the plumber far deeper than any of his pipes! Now, what's yer answer? For, my boy, there's other good fish now in the sea, and they're mighty catchable! She can pick and choose!”

Bennett was startled by this rough threat suddenly thrown out by Doolan! “Damn the thing!” he growled, “I hate to be pushed into a sack like a cat! I'll tell you what I'll do, Doolan! In two weeks I will give you my answer, if I decide to colonize, and do as you wish. There is one thing that I stipulate for.

I know that a man who is married is a man who is marred—as regards all the outside charms of life! There is seventy per cent ‘accident risk,’ and an added burden on the man who fails now ‘in marrying sensibly!’ I will not have my future handicapped if this thing does not go! I will insist on a quiet marriage, the next day after election—and I will not be humiliated by any one knowing what I would owe to a rich wife!” His heart was beating wildly as he saw a shabby trick of the future possibly rising up before him! A social scandal, a smothered divorce, a public accusation of bad faith. “No! I must give Madeleine the slip, quietly!” He was already meanly unfaithful at heart to the woman whom he had drawn into the gloomy net of this secret marriage. The lonely, orphaned beauty!

“Ye’re very sensible in all this, Bennett,” said Doonan. “And ye’re only prudent, too! See how easy the thing works: You just move into the district! In secret ye can snuggle up to the widow! That’s no hard job! She won’t squeal and ye won’t talk yerself—a close corporation,” he leered. “Ye get yer nomination sure. The election money will be all put up, and—your twenty thousand will be handed to you on election night, when the returns are made up! The very next day ye can marry Mrs. Martyn and then slip away for a honeymoon tour and rest. For ye don’t go in till March, and ye can stay quietly here in her cosy home, and then go in ‘in glory!’ Ye’ll be a ‘social leader’ down there, and ye can see when she brings ye the nomination, she’ll make a big running for ye down there, too! She’s a very fine woman!”

“Well, wait two weeks!” cheerfully said Bennett. “I think that I can make it a go! I only want to hold on to this big legal connection! I feel I can pull Bashford around later, but only secretly. The other two partners are already jealous of me! They must know nothing of my ideas until I am named for the place. In that way, it would help me—in any other way it would be my ruin, as a lawyer!”

"Ah! I see!" grinned Red Mike. "Ye want the thing to be a 'spontanyous ovashun!' An outpourin' of the people's pent up affeckshuns! I'm onto that game, and it always takes! Ye see yer a new, fresh face! Yes! The thing will go through!" He gleefully rubbed his hands and then stirred up a "night-cap," as Bennett rose to seek the last ferry boat. "How about your share of this money, Doolan?" he said sharply. "Oh! I'll take yer note of hand for that, payable after election, and before the wedding. Ye'll have no trouble to get it! For there's a softenin' period just after marriage, when a lovin' woman will do anything!" He chuckled coarsely.

Mr. Seaton Bennett was the very last man to be warned out of the Manhattan Club smoking room on that eventful night. He drank nothing, but he smoked several great cigars before he saw any "way out" of the possible problem of avoiding the dangerous possession of two wives at once! "One is enough at a time!" he growled, as he sought the friendly counsel of the stars on his way to his rooms. A dark shadow veiled the moon as he muttered: "There is one thing in my favor—Madeleine has no near friends, and I have no cursed relatives! There is no one to watch us! Nobody cares!" he bitterly mused. "And she is proud, shy, and perfectly unsuspecting! I must 'sweeten' on her all this winter, and so get her 'perfectly under my secret control!' Yes, and there's that devil of a Bashford, too, on the watch! Does he really want to marry her?" And the husband of a few months meanly sneered at his loving wife's self-sacrifice as he slammed the street door behind him. "She was a fool not to have made herself an old man's darling!"

And reticent, eager, watchfully suspicious, he was very mindful of the sharp-eyed Flossie Renwick's return. "It's not on the cards for her to be a friend of mine! I must 'sweeten' on Madeleine, and make her a young man's slave! For she can't get away from me! If she would only be wise and take the Hall and the hundred thousand, she would then be worth the

keeping, and I could buy my own way into congress! If she would work old Bashford! Then I would be safe on the double event. What a woman to be at my side! But, she has her fantastic notions! With all her talents, she is a fool in the practical world, for such prudish women are hampered by custom and muzzled by the ways of the world. There's only one way for them to make a winning! The open beauty market of marriage, or the secret man hunt, using their charms 'pro bono publico' where they will do the most good! That's woman's easiest career—and it comes to that at last with many of them."

These ignoble sentiments were carefully concealed in the private mental "safe deposit" of the would-be statesman, as he began to assiduously follow up the secret wife who might make or mar his political future. In the brief interval before Florence Renwick's arrival, Bennett never referred to that loving pilgrim's projected raid. With a kindly diplomacy, Hiram Bashford had trusted to the dashing affection of the returning woman who was now his secret ally. "Just carry her off by main force, as it were," was the chief's last injunction to the returning Renwicks. It fell out that Madeleine Ware was in all the softened glow of her artful husband's renewed tenderness when Madame Flossie Renwick burst in upon the dull legal toilers of William Street, as a bright meteor of Frenchified Americanism. She was replete with all the latest trans-Atlantic "improvements," and "not to be denied!" James Renwick was apparently busied with the delighted Bodley, while his wife struggled in loving vehemence with Madeleine in her secluded private rooms. And Seaton Bennett was watchfully forearmed as the two ladies emerged after a half hour's earnest conversation. The plotting husband easily read in Mrs. Renwick's delighted face that she had gained a victory—and he studied the newcomer very keenly while going through the formalities of an introduction. Mr. Blake was also a member of the merry social group presided over by the happy Bodley, now rubbing his

hands in secret delight. "I can attend to all of Hiram's affairs," he confidently said, "so, Miss Madeleine, there is absolutely nothing to delay you! When do you go home, Madame?" queried Bodley, fearful of Madeleine's possible recusancy. "We will take the early train to-morrow morning," laughed the victorious little matron, looking at her jeweled watch. "It is now two! I shall wait dinner for you till seven! I have your promise!" was Mrs. Renwick's last injunction, as her husband led her away. "I will go with you!" said the modern Portia, happy to have passed the dangerous ordeal of a meeting awkward enough all round. "I must speak to you about one or two cases, Mr. Bennett!" said Madeleine with downcast eyes, "as I shall leave at four, and then go home to arrange and close up my rooms for the few weeks till Mr. Bashford returns!" The husband and wife were unbetrayed by the last conference in Hiram Bashford's sanctum, but Madeleine Ware's heart sank within her when Flossie Renwick that night demanded, the very moment they were alone: "Who is that young man Bennett?" "Oh! Only one of the office lawyers!" carelessly replied Madeleine. "That man loves you, secretly!" cried Mrs. Flossie, "for, I caught his eyes following you. The eyes do not lie!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLITTING OF PORTIA.

There was some unseen spirit of discord which hovered over Castle Atwater in the two long months of Madeleine Ware's visit with the girl wife, from whom she had once no heart secrets. The golden glories of the Indian summer were as witching as in happier years, the blue mist veiled the Pennsylvanian hills as

tenderly as of old, but there were changed hearts in the little circle which the arrival of Hiram Bashford had at last made a "partie carée." For the great counselor had given but one day to the "welcome home" of his New York friends, one other to scanning his accumulated business, and he had noted even then with a sinking heart that Madeleine had removed all her belongings to her own prim office room before her departure.

"Where is Bennett?" was his first question after Bodley had closed the door for a brief conference in private. "I sent him out of town for a week or so. He is all run down with overwork. He has a giant intellect, and yet has taxed himself too heavily for us! He's away yachting for a few days!"

"Bodley! We must do well by that youngster!" said Bashford, "for he has been a treasure trove, and when he comes back, and I return, let us think over what we can do for him! I would not want any one to win him away! He is a rising man! He tried that Shearer case in classic style!"

While Hiram Bashford wandered in the leafy groves of Castle Atwater, anxiously unbosoming his whole heart to Florence Renwick, the pale-faced young wife was thrown on the defensive. She had welcomed Bashford with timid gratitude, and shrank away from the ordeal of his exploring eyes. It was but natural that the happy bridegroom of a year, James Renwick, should fill up the social hours left on his hands with Miss Ware, while Florence and the chief in vain sought for the key of the enigma. "The girl is strangely changed at heart! She is not the woman I left here!" sadly confided the little millionairess to Bashford. "I cannot force myself upon her! How Quixotic! She tells me that she and three other 'independent women' have leased a Mrs. Walton's place at Mamaroneck, and that lady, a journalist, goes over to Europe on a long professional mission—for a year." Bashford was gloomy-browed as he said: "Do you know anything of her ultimate plans?" "Not an iota!"

briefly replied Florence. "There is a wall—a thin, invisible barrier—between us. I am really satisfied to see her join this new circle which she has selected, for, at heart, she has only fretted here. Even Jimmy sees that! Yes, we have lost the Madeleine of other days!"

"It is incomprehensible!" mused Bashford, flicking off a tall weed with his cane in a savage right cut. "Madeleine has absolutely refused to accept the Hall! She has rebuffed me in trying to restore the real dowry which Shearer swindled her out of, for I have commenced new action for 'fraud' against him and his father-in-law, and I will wear them out yet and make Delaware too hot for them yet. But, as you say, we have lost the Madeleine we knew of old. She has let fall some vague hints about leaving New York and going abroad for study and change, or else leaving to select a legal field for herself in the West! Has she any intimates, any new connections, any heart affairs?" The old lawyer blushed, as he felt ashamed of trying to trap Madeleine's secrets at second hand! "No! I know of none! Do you know of any possible love intrigue yourself? Has any one been hounding her down in her lonely helplessness? She looks at times sadly distraught and unhappy! Her heart is not here, it is not with me! Where is it?" "Ah! I have lost the clue—and her confidence!" mourned Bashford. He dared not tell Flossie Renwick of his own blunt offer to throw the battlements of his wealth and impregnable position around Madeleine! For he was now sadly undeceived, and he knew that no one loved him! He had shunned the cold hearthstone of his own lonely mansion on Gramercy Park, and now Madeleine's unhappy eyes drove him away from the Pennsylvania Eden.

"I can't stand the strain any longer! Perhaps the poor child has lost all heart and hope. God bless her!" said Hiram, speaking in a hushed voice. "I shall leave the Hall to her absolutely for life, and with a remainder to you, should she die childless! And, by heavens, I'll tie up some money for her, too, with Hugh

and Renwick as trustees! She must not know of this! Florence, I trust my poor secret to you alone! Now, I must go down to Washington and report, then back to the old grind again!" He turned away with a choking voice. And beautiful Florence Renwick never saw him go, for a mist of tears veiled her bright eyes! "How he has loved her!" she murmured, and the wall of the cold estrangement was builded a course higher that night. No one ever knew the history of Bashford's last assault that night on the bulwarks of Madeleine Ware's false pride. For he knew her not as "Madeleine Bennett," and when the sound of earnest voices ceased and Florence sought her friend, the door of Madeleine's room was locked and the windows were darkened! In that darkness a woman, conscious of a life's mistake, of thwarted ambition and estranged friends—lay there sobbing alone, a neglected and unacknowledged wife! In the morning Florence eagerly sought for an explanation, for Hiram Bashford had gone in the gray dawn!

And all the answer which she received was Madeleine's announcement of her own departure on the morrow. It was a kindly fever of helpful love which made Florence Renwick still cling to Madeleine that last night with straining arms, but the departing guest gave no sign! "At least, you will promise me one thing, Maddy!" implored Florence. "You will make no change in your life, you will not go away without giving me a sign! Think of all the past! Of all the hearts, the loving hearts here! You are under some sorrow—under some spell! But you will give me a sign! That I may see you, that I may come to you! Tell me—what is it?"

Touched to the heart, the stately Portia drew Florence to her throbbing breast. "I will give you a sign. You shall know all—when there is anything to tell!" "And there is nothing now?" The little matron's eyes were searching her very soul. "There is nothing!" sadly said Madeleine, as they parted, and the saddened woman, true to one who meditated her betrayal, slept

with that holy lie on her lips! It was holy to her, for she was true to Seaton Bennett—"quand même!"

Tears fell upon the roses which she kissed after Florence Atwater had whispered the last "Good-bye" at the station next day, and the last golden link parted forever as they separated with the unanswered question thrilling both their anxious hearts!

Back to her work, back to the new home whose selection had been approved by her secretly wedded husband as furnishing a complete defense to prying eyes,—the spiritless woman went, in all the cloud of the complete estrangement.

Before Hiram Bashford had returned from the long drawn out welcome home of the Secretary of State, Madeleine Bennett was back again at her daily duties with an inscrutable face, and wrapped in the mantle of a new self-evolved resistance to even the most affectionate intrusion! Blake and Bodley gazed at each other with wondering eyes, and then, exchanged grave nods and wags of the head at the evident constraint of the chief toward the woman whose mysterious self-repression astonished them all. "Things are going decidedly wrong in that direction!" sagely remarked Bodley, whereat Blake wondered. "The girl stands in her own light!" he regretfully said.

And yet, in the lengthened vacation of the absent wife, Mr. Seaton Bennett had very judiciously moved forward his lines of circumvallation about the wary widow of Murray Hill! A week's knocking about the Sound, on that snug schooner yacht, the "Raven," brought back color to his cheeks. For he had all the threads of his tangled skein now well gathered up! A few secret conferences of the Long Island Sporting Club and some sub rosa committee work at Tammany Hall, with a jaunt to Saratoga, where horses, flirtations, a bit of play, a little epicureanism, and some moonlight strolls with the fair widow, amused him; all this had kept him in touch with the Tiger's secret council. "The cards are running all my way!" gleefully cried Bennett on his return. For Hiram Bashford had given

him a royal accolade of welcome into the higher ranks of the profession. "Bennett, don't hesitate to tell us what we can do for you as a firm," he said. "You have fairly won your spurs!" So the cowardly husband exulted in his safety, for there, as he came out of the chief's room, facing him, sat his noble wife, with her beautiful steadfast eyes fixed gravely upon him in an implicit trust. Her loving pride in her husband's ovation from Bashford was most coldly chilled by his furtive remark, when he stole in for a few words: "Did old Bashford do anything of a practical nature for you?" The startled woman murmured: "Seaton! I could take nothing from him! What you cannot give me, I will work to gain for myself!" The plotter saw his error and sneeringly said: "He seemed so very expansive in his general glow of glory, that's all! I will come out to Mamaroneck to-morrow and spend Sunday!" And he threw in a few tender words, which faintly revived the glamour of the days of iris hopes! But an uneasy loneliness secretly gnawed at the woman's proud heart! With no definite accusation, she felt herself deserted in spirit. It required all Seaton Bennett's skillful touch of the "lost chords" to bring the harmonies out of her heart when he came to see her at Mamaroneck. Even his first query jarred upon her when he arrived at the snug Walton retreat. "Is there any fear of Hiram Bashford blundering in on us here?" Madeleine's heart was rent with a sudden pang as she said, sadly: "There is no fear! I see no one but you! And, he will never seek me out again!"

Seaton Bennett bent his brows in moody reflection as he took the last Sunday night train for New York. "Confound these women, with their mysterious depths of unfathomed nature!" he growled. "Madeleine seems to have handled Bashford far too roughly! Her fingers are all thumbs! There was no need of her digging this chasm! It's her stately independence and all that nonsense! Now, if she had been only alive to my interests!" he went mooning along, forgetting that these alms from Bashford would be her disgrace in the

world's eyes, and a badge of shame to him! "But, thank God, I control the situation!" he rejoiced. "None of them suspect my intimacy with this stiff-necked girl! The Walton is away for a long stay abroad! And this change of base is a protection! Yes! My lines are all closed up! Even if Madeleine would disappear, no one would connect me with it! Not even these sly women at the Walton cottage! They have their own secrets to keep!" he chuckled. "And I will only make occasional calls! Madeleine can meet me at any station, or over on the Hudson, even on the Long Island shore! I must watch myself carefully both here and at the office!" The succeeding evenings Mr. Seaton Bennett devoted to a final review of the campaign for the winter. He evolved, in the quiet seclusion of his club, a scheme to mingle far more openly in general society. "A good preparation for the coming congressional campaign!" he decided. His last task was to weigh the two women he was deluding—against each other—with the nicest care. He recognized the frank, business-like ways of Mrs. Julie Martyn, who had systematically paraded him past her long list of properties, investments and securities. Tied to all the honorable silence of his profession, he gloated over the compact serried battalions of Mrs. Martyn's wealth. He could not but admire the self-control and rare discernment which had carried her unscathed over the possible scars of the red hot plough shares on the usual path of the wealthy widow. Her name was mentioned only in a hushed respect! Neither by covert insinuation, or vulgar ostentation had her good name been marred! She was a woman to cause no lifting of the eyebrows, even in the high places of Washington society, for the velvety moss was thick long since on the grave of the golden plumber, and she had never made a single "break!" It was the custom of Mrs. Julie Martyn to socially entertain with a chastened sober elegance, and the support of certain dames of the blue blood was not wanting. Mrs. Julie Martyn's standing was "beyond all cavil!" Her home was rap-

idly becoming "colonial," and her succulent canvas back ducks, well-cooled champagne, veritable terrapin, and available carriage and opera box—drew these "pillars" of moral support—the blue-blooded dames—to her side with a magnetic pull of never failing power. Seaton Bennett slowly went over all her good points. "She is a fine dresser, good form, in brilliant health, of decided snap and go, veritably well grounded, and, as a 'woman of no illusions,' would play her part well in any social rank!" He never looked for a being of "gushing tenderness;" he moved watchfully at her side, and with a cautious self retention was most un-failing in all his secret courtesies. In her presence, when alone, he poured out the best flashes of his well-stored mind, and most judiciously refrained from making himself "cheap in her eyes!"

So, on through the varied scenes of the busy winter he held his winning place at her side, the gentle strain coming always from her own jeweled hand! The bodyguard of Tammany aristocrats, who were his only "fellow visitors," murmured often to the anxious Doolan as the fleeting days of the New York season sped away. They were all mixed up in the same "deal" which included Seaton Bennett, and they yearned for the surety of the "solid connection" which would bring to aid them all the mighty Doolan's manipulative power, Mrs. Martyn's support of a solid nature, the prestige of being on the ticket with Seaton Bennett, and the valuable down-town influence of the great firm of "Bashford, Blake and Bodley!" So, on upward into the zenith of the winter skies the star of Seaton Bennett triumphantly mounted! He forgot the trembling star, paled now by his own light, the wistful-eyed woman, whose burden of secret disappointment now burned in her own loyal, trusting bosom. In court and chamber, at club and in council, Seaton Bennett was hailed as a "coming man!" Dumbly, mutely, with her shadowed eyes fixed on his in a veiled yearning, Madeleine Ware-Bennett made her daily toil a guarded sham to watch in spirit over the man who had at last

decided that in some way he must cast her off! Once only in the long March days did she break down! With her arms clinging around him, in a transport of loving despair, the young wife cried: "Seaton! Seaton! Take me away from all this! It is killing me, this double life—innocent though it be! For the part is too hard for me!" And, liar at heart, Bennett strained her to his breast. "Wait! Wait! Madeleine, my own!" he cried, "till summer comes again! Then I will take you far away!" And in this scanty comfort, she again faced the daily life, now an ordeal of suffering, for she could not frankly meet Hiram Bashford's sorrowing, inquiring eyes! And even gentle Flossie Renwick had wept, under her Christmas tree, over the sundered tie that bound in love no more! At times Seaton Bennett, plotting a future treason, felt his stony heart waver! There was all the romance of Madeleine's splendid line of honored ancestry! Her old home, stately in its desolation, recalled the days of the vanished glories of the house of Ware. The breath of the vanished summer days quickened his pulses once more as when she turned to meet him in the dim wooded aisles of her lost birthright. "By God, it's too bad," he muttered. "She ought to have been born a Duchess, or chilled into a Vassar 'professorin.' But the hell of New York's poverty and loneliness is no place for her. Why the devil didn't she marry old Bashford? Did he want her?" And the voice of his political ambition drowned his dreams of the old stoned Hall and its witching gardens. "If I had the money, what a figure she would cut as queen of the country side! I might practice law a few years longer, buy the Hall and then rise to be Senator from Delaware. Bashford, old fool, may leave her a pot of money yet." But he feared the long waiting for "dead men's shoes." "Bashford may last thirty years," growled Bennett. "He has oaken ribs and a heart of steel. And those dreamy old Delaware burgesses do not take kindly to new comers. I would be smothered down there like Madeleine's father, in the little peninsula whence few

depart and whither few go. No, I will not wither in that mental dry rot—which made her father a life-long failure. And scenery, family traditions and local blue blood pride would not keep the old domain up. It would be a good place for Bashford to retire into, if I had let him marry Madeleine.” And at last, Seaton Bennett realized that only a savage personal jealousy, born of an overmastering passion, had made him rob Bashford of a stately wife, at least a loving companion and a worthy later heiress. “Now, I can’t get rid of her without sacrificing my firm connection or the congressional honors, if she makes the slightest row. And I can’t get the nomination but by Julie Martyn’s ‘inside pull.’ I’ve but a few months, and she must be out of New York and hoodwinked into quiet long before I dare marry Julie. I could fight her if Julie would stick to me. But, damn it, I wouldn’t dare to face Madeleine. Julie would know at once that a woman of Madeleine’s character would not fight unless truth were at her back. There’s one good thing, though. That blunder-head old justice of the peace at Magnolia is dead.” Seaton Bennett chuckled as he remembered the reply of his official successor when the rising statesman, casually running over from Philadelphia, wished to look at the country magistrate’s records. “Applejack laid him out, poor old boy,” said the New Jersey justice of the peace, “and he burned the house over his own head, and all his records went up, too. A clean sweep. So I open on a fresh deal! If you want any legal information from his records, sir, you will have to wait till you see him.”

“This is lucky, as far as my own safety goes. She can prove no marriage,” mused Bennett. “But it’s all the same a deadly personal risk. Bashford would believe her, and then throw me out of the firm. Julie Martyn, too, cannot be fooled like an ‘ingenue.’ I must fool Madeleine and get her far away, so far that she will not come back to New York till all is over and I’m safe.” And then the busy, viewless devil who walked at his side whispered, “Why should she come

back at all?" "Red Mike" brought the issue up flatly as the April days came slowly on. "See here, Bennett," he said, "there's the whole combination for the election year coming on soon. It's not so long to nomination now. Ye will ruin the chances of two or three of our men on the November ticket if ye don't make yerself square at once with Mrs. Martyn. Perhaps you don't know how deep she is in this year's work. Why, she is in 'dock and ferry speculations,' in 'banking contracts' and a dozen other things, as well as 'bridge and transit franchises.' For she can certify a check for a quarter of a million any day she wishes to. And the council 'squares her out' with a big slice after they use her ready money. Suppose she threw you over. You'd lose her, her million, too, and ye'd never see Congress. For she would follow you, and all her friends would 'knife you' politically and 'turn you down' every time. She is backing all the three men you look up to as your Tammany foster brothers in glory, and she owns the very yacht, the "Raven," you've been knocking around on all this summer. It's her wine you have been drinking." "Red Mike" eyed the agitated man, who was now penned up in a close corner.

"How can I ever get rid of Madeleine, and at such short notice?" The lawyer was visibly debating a knotty point.

"Bennett," whispered the keen-eyed Doolan, "if ye're stuck with any woman complication, if that's the only obstacle, I'll stay by ye to the death and help you. out! By God, ye are ruined for life if ye don't make the runnin' now, with the widow."

Seaton Bennett, with pale lips, was murmuring, "To the death, to the death," as he sank into a chair. Ten minutes later he left Doolan's and the grasp of their hands was the pledge of an awful secret. For both knew now that the bar which signaled "No thoroughfare" to the Capital at Washington must bend or break at last.

"I'll cover yer tracks. and stand by ye," hoarsely

whispered Red Mike. "Make it an accident, or a—disappearance." When left alone Doolan sat down in a cold shiver and it took several "brandies straight" to lift him out of the gloomy spell. "Fifty thousand dollars is a great pile, and it will just lift the last mortgage on 'Doolan's Row.'" It was a new piece of property which he had ventured to build on wind.

There was secret keeping all round the dismembered circle of the past year whereof the fragments revolved irregularly in the changed orbits of the office life of the great law firm. Hiram Bashford's stately form was conspicuously absent for several weeks. He slipped away "incognito" to Delaware and Pennsylvania, and there perfected the trust which placed the Hall in the future hands of Madeleine Ware, with the reversion to Florence Renwick, should the beneficiary die childless. And Hugh Atwater and James Renwick now knew of a codicil of mighty importance attached to Bashford's will. "She shall also have the money to keep it up," he stoutly said. Before he proceeded to take a personal hand in "harrying" Robert Shearer and his banker backer anew, Bashford unfolded all his plans for a final "coup de main" to Mrs. Flossie Renwick, who was only in part consoled for the loss of the golden friendship of Ogontz by the presence of Master James Renwick, Jr., born to rule over the underlying deposits of coal and iron which upheld the mighty house of Atwater. "I shall take a two years' rest," Bashford confided to the beautiful matron. "My apparent leaving the firm is only to persuade Madeleine Ware of the barrenness of her own hard-won honors. She has more than justified her intellectual claims, and yet, her face tells me that she is weary of that daily drudgery which is to man his best safeguard against mad speculation or vicious riot. There is a certain feeling of isolation sure to finally come over our estranged darling. I think that she sees now the martyrdom of her precious youth. The other members of the firm are only distantly polite. She will voluntarily leave our firm when she thinks I am out of it.

Then, Florence, you must recapture her for me! I have done my best. I will go abroad, and your husband and brother can inform her later of the gift of Ware Hall and the trust of invested monies for her. You can tell her frankly that if she does not accept it, you must, and that, failing you, I will later set up an establishment for orphan girls there. Once out of this false New York life, she will soon marry some good man of her own social rank. Nature will assert itself." There was a pause. Mrs. Renwick's eyes were downcast. "Does this man Seaton Bennett not seem congenial to her? I thought—" The young mother hesitated, while Hiram Bashford laughed frankly. "Why, Bodley and Blake tell me they are simply indifferent to each other. No. Bennett is devoured with political ambition and he is the last man to load himself down now with a wife. He's a perfect type of the egoistic New Yorker. He will wait till he can afford to buy a wife—a wife à la mode—after he has arrived at fortune, or else until some rich woman buys him; that's a new trade now for wealthy widows who want social standing."

"Ah, then I was mistaken," murmured Florence, bending over Renwick Junior, who was most vigorously trying to swallow both his chubby fists.

"This is the last chance," remarked Hiram Bashford, "and it will reduce Madeleine's proposed career to a simple trial of will power between us. Of course, I count upon her feeling of delicacy to cause her to leave the daily association of the strangers left in the firm."

"And if she should really go away West or leave us, on some tangential career," murmured Florence, her face troubled in doubts of the working of the new plan.

"Then, God be with her," loyally cried Bashford. "I have done my best."

At this interesting time of the holding of all these new plans to entrap the modern Portia into the meshes of Friendship's golden net, Seaton Bennett had neatly lulled his unacknowledged wife into a shadowy dream

of rainbowed hopes. "It will not be many months till a wedding ring will be on your hand, dearest," the plotter murmured. "My plans are now nearly finished and when one or two more sheet anchors are cast out for security I can break away and give you the happy home that I have long dreamed of. Yet, a little patience." With assumed tenderness he wove his fairy web, while her glistening eyes beamed on him in happiness. That night she kissed the wedding ring which she wore concealed upon her bosom, throbbing with a new born hope. It was a renewed access of the love she had cherished in her loyal loneliness.

"He loves me; he works only to make me happy," she gladly whispered as she began to count the days before her. For he had whispered:

"No one must know of our departure. Trust to me to bring all out right. You know what it would endanger to arouse Bashford's wrath. You can slip away, as if going on a summer tour, and then secretly join me."

"I do trust you, in life and death, my husband," were the words which rang in his ears as he went away to answer a sudden summons.

"Now, what's the widow's important business?" fretted Seaton Bennett, as he answered in person a very imperative note from Murray Hill. Mrs. Julie Martyn's private legal consultations had been royally paid for, and her aspiring suitor of the future knew that he would lose neither time nor money in her behests. Bennett was strangely agitated now as he listened.

"I wish you to act for me in a confidential matter which involves several hundreds of thousands of dollars," said Mrs. Martyn, with a peculiar glance, when her "counselor" was snugly ensconced in her dainty working den that night. Bennett's quick eyes noted that Madame Julie had not forgotten to do justice to everyone of her "fine points." A veritable Queen of Sheba receiving an ambitious and passionate Solomon. For it was but an "airy fiction" which kept them

now apart, and Julie Martyn's fiery glances told her legal champion that these days of suspense were all too long. They had easily fathomed each other's secret longings.

"Here are the papers of a new patent process for the reduction of gold ores and their vastly improved economy of working," briskly said Julie Martyn, giving him a portfolio from her own private safe. "I have a very large interest in this affair. We have the inventor under control—a celebrated young German professor. He is now working in private, down at Prince's Bay. There is an old factory there which we have used for an experimental station, and we have a couple of our own trusty men watching him there in secret. Now, Mr. Bennett," the beautiful woman said, "I trust to no one but you." The lawyer's heart beat fast under her meaning glance. "They want more money. It is a matter of a cold hundred thousand dollars to risk. This new gold process seems to be a marvelous success and it will be tried on a great scale in some Montana mines of mine, this summer. I will put my yacht, the 'Raven,' absolutely at your disposal. The sailing master will have my own orders, and no one but you will be allowed to step on board. She is yours. All you have to do is to give your orders." The acute business woman dropped her eyes modestly under Bennett's burning glances.

"Am I to go a gold hunting on a yacht?" he said, in wonder.

"Not so," laughed Julie Martyn. "You are to drop in there unexpectedly during the early summer months as if you were only a confidential visitor. Watch him. Watch all those also who watch him. Look into this thing. It promises rarely. You can make these little holiday runs when you will. The yacht will lie off the Battery. It's just a pretty little sail down there. Then I wish you to keep yourself free this summer for me. Don't go rambling after strange goddesses," she smiled, "for you must go later out to Montana with him and tell me if the process does 'hold up' in a month's test,

at a forty-stamp mill. I will give you *carte blanche*, but," she dropped her eyes, "this whole thing must be an absolute secret between us. I only trust to you."

Their eyes were aflame as Seaton Bennett said, in a low voice, "But, to my partners?"

"Oh, tell them that you are going hunting in the Rockies, or to the Yellowstone," laughed the quick-witted woman. "Then, when you come back, if you are successful," she paused in a sudden confusion, but she raised her glowing eyes and placed her hand in his, "there is nothing I will not do for you. I will see that you have your reward and—control a good block of the stock."

The tell-tale flush of blood leaping to Bennett's cheeks told the panting beauty of her long-delayed victory.

"I understand you," he said, with affected lightness, "and I will do as you bid me."

"Remember, it is our own little secret," faltered Julie Martyn.

"I will take these papers home and be ready to go down and see this professor at once. What is his name?" Bennett was glad to interject these details.

"There are your credentials, sir," she laughingly said. "Professor Eckfeldt. It is sealed," she continued, handing him a letter. "The yacht captain will report to you at the office. And now I shall have to dismiss you, for I have an engagement. You see that I counted on your kindness." Her glance made the busy devil in his heart leap for joy. "Allow me to offer you a glass of wine. We must drink to the success of the Cyanide process."

When Seaton Bennett departed, Julie Martyn, in her dressing room, gazed at her bright face in the glass. "I shall have a Washington winter at last," she mused, as the deft maid arranged her for a prearranged outing. For, she was sure of her wary fish now. The golden bait had caught him!

A week later there was no secret in the office of Bashford, Blake and Bodley as to the long rest which

the chief proposed to take. A genial smile played upon Bodley's features, for the senior had handsomely "made it up to him" for the necessary hiatus in the annual European trips. "You can take Mrs. Bodley over to Newport," kindly said Hiram, "as you must stay in charge, and I'll see that it costs you nothing."

Counselor Blake's fishing tour, too, was well earned, and he gloated over a proposed meeting with Seaton Bennett in the far Rockies.

"This is a regular windfall," cried Bennett, after he had deftly communicated the news to Madeleine Ware, who was now the unconscious center of several hidden schemes. Little recked the happy woman, for by the throbbing of her happy heart she knew the time had come at last for her husband to take her away.

"It is in your interest that I do this," said Bennett, "and not a human being must know where we meet. I will arrange it and tell you just what to do."

"I trust it, all in all, to you, Seaton," was the simple answer of the delighted woman, who knew now that she would openly wear the hidden wedding ring at last. And there was "a song of love sounding in her bounding heart."

Many and strangely varied trips did Mrs. Julie Martyn's lawyer spy make to the secret laboratory on Staten Island in the last two months of the legal season of 1892. And rapidly the secret understanding between the unfaithful husband and his lovely client progressed to a "confidential intimacy" of the closest kind. Yet the would-be Congressman knew the woman who now ruled him, far too well, to attempt the faintest insolence. There was a keen flash in Julie Martyn's eye, sharp enough to daunt even a professional roué. Bennett, cold and egoistic, had driven madly on in the path of ambition and was no *Almaviva*. He knew that an indulgence in the faintest liberty would wreck his whole campaign. And, though neither the Adam nor Eve of this new Paradise was guileless, they were both restrained by the wordless pact which bound their futures firmly together even now. And they both slyly waited,

while Madeleine Ware waited counting the flying hours with a happy heart. She was tranquil, even though Hiram Bashford had already gone upon a preliminary trial jaunt of his long rest, no one knew whither. Madeleine was happy in Flossie Renwick's acceptance of an evasive promise to "come to her in the later summer." That acute matron waited too, confident of the final success of Bashford's innocent loving artifices. He had gone away in the hopefulness of Madeleine Ware's admission that she had yet made no summer plans, but would not remain this year at the office.

"I shall surely not return till the October sessions if I decide to go away," was the modern Portia's gentle subterfuge.

Bashford smiled as he pressed her hands in a last fond good-bye. "I shall hear of you through Florence, I know," he said cheerfully, "and I shall see you again myself before the office closes." He did not know, as the fair woman gazed wistfully at his departing form, that she stood tranced in a loving concern for him.

"How will he regard my secret marriage to Seaton?" she pondered, as there was already a perfected plan that she should leave the city quietly for that mysterious voyage toward the West. "Ah, he will be so proud of Seaton yet," murmured Madeleine, "for my husband will forge on up to the head of the bar, when the head of the great firm retires." As yet no man dared to question Hiram Bashford's unchallenged leadership. These were golden days to Madeleine.

Mr. Seaton Bennett was now an amateur scientist of a daily growing experience. "It seems almost incredible," he reported to Mrs. Julie Martyn, "but there are no weak links apparently in the logic of this great metallurgist. I have watched him with an eagle eye. I have made myself a school boy for your sake," he gently said, "and I only wish to make 'assurance doubly sure' before I pronounce it a success."

"The Western trip will tell of our final victory," answered Julie Martyn. "It is all in your own hands."

And the blue waters of Prince's Bay were often lit up with the gleaming silvery sails of the "Raven" as Bennett, now earnest and stern-eyed, watched the manipulations of the young German scientist. In the carefully locked rooms of the Heidelberg élève, Seaton Bennett spent hours in watching all the operations of the experimental machinery. Refractory ores heretofore sent to Baltimore or to far Swansea, readily gave up values almost to the assay limit, and the possibility of any lurking fraud seemed to have entirely vanished. It only remained for the new process to be tested on a grand scale in the far away glens of Montana.

"This is the one chemical ingredient which will revolutionize all cheap gold processes," frankly said one day the spectacled blue-eyed young German, as he stood in his secret sanctum with the lawyer in their final conferences. For the discoverer had at last laid his whole heart open to Seaton Bennett. He knew the lawyer served the fairy whose gold made the mills go now in the hope of a future golden harvest. There was a formidable row of tinned cylinders standing there with huge labels all marked "Powers and Weightman, Philadelphia. Cyanide of Potassium. 25 lbs." The ghastly ornamentation of a skull and cross bones and the ominous word "Poison" caused Bennett to carefully question the long-haired German youth, pipe in hand, whose shabby working clothes bore the mark of every acid, reagent and chemical known to his mystic art.

"Is that such a deadly poison, Eckfeldt?" queried the lawyer.

The amiable German took up a pinch of the white powder in a horn spoon. "There you have the lives of a dozen. It must be handled with care. The solution is often used in photography for cleaning old negative plates. I had a dear college friend who drank off a glass of it, thinking that it was water, and he dropped dead almost instantly. Of course, we use the cyanogen when liberated to attract the heretofore lost precious

metal in a chemical combination. There's our whole simple secret."

"Has it taste?" huskily questioned Bennett.

"The powder tastes like those French candies flavored with bitter almond, or like peach pits," babbled Eckfeldt, as he wandered away to fill his long pipe.

Some queer fancy then possessed Mr. Seaton Bennett to quickly fill his cigarette case with the "harmless looking white powder" from the open tin cylinder.

"You may sleep in peace to-night, Professor," remarked the lawyer, as the spectacled scientist returned veiled in the clouds of his student pipe. "I shall predict for you a great success. I believe in your proposition from the first. I report in your favor." For the private espionage was now over and the sanguine inventor knew now that Mr. Seaton Bennett would proceed to draw up the last papers assuring him a fortune sufficient to return some day and marry that sapphire-eyed fraulein with the Marguerite braids, who now pined for him under the castled steps of Heidelberg. She kept her "watch on the Rhine" for the lover soon to return in a sudden prosperity, laureled and loaded down with shekels, to the mild raptures of a German bride.

All the way back to New York, as the black-hulled "Raven" drove along under her bellying sails, Mr. Seaton Bennett thought of that ominous sign, the skull and cross bones, on those tin cylinders.

"This seems to be most deadly stuff and it makes no noise. It is quick to act, and tastes like French candy," mused the legal expert as he carefully sealed up his cigarette case in several wrappers and then locked it in his own private locker on the yacht. "I am sure that Dutch fool will never miss this," he mused as he strolled into a drug store on his way uptown and then looked over the headings in a Pharmacopeia. He was unusually cheerful as he made his final report that evening to the fair and ardent woman who was destined to be either his salvation or his ruin.

"If what you say is true, I will order Professor Eck-

feldt to close up all and go at once out to Helena. You can follow him and be already at the Golden Eagle mine when he gets the apparatus in order. You will be free in two weeks. Shall I do it, Seaton?" the glowing woman whispered as she stole up to his side and clasped both his fevered hands in her soft white palms. It was late when the recreant husband left the room where the mutual passion had been at last unveiled. For she had thrown off her womanly mask at last and he had suddenly dropped his own. In whispered words their burning ardor fanned the flame of the long pent-up passion. There was none to hear the woman's fond avowals. There was no spy to catch that rapid exchange of plans which bound the lady of the "Golden Eagle" to the aspiring congressional neophyte, but fearing nothing in his arms, the woman told the story of all her dreams of their golden future. "I would not have betrayed myself to you," she murmured, with her hand resting upon his breast, "but I could not let you go and face this long separation without knowing that I loved you. There are a thousand eyes to watch us here, a thousand ears to overhear a single word dropped! Wait! Wait!" she whispered. And before the traitor left her there was a day fixed which was to be marked with a gilded milestone in their lives! The day after the election, the "Honorable Seaton Bennett" and his wife would seek a revenge in sweet oblivion for all these months of weary waiting. And, on the assembling of the new Congress, Mrs. Julie Bennett would step over the threshold of the Capitol on the arm of her victorious husband. "I am so happy that I can open the door to you, Seaton!" the beautiful political intriguante murmured, "For you are worthy of it!" There were two happy women in New York city the next morning, two radiant ones—for Mrs. Julie Martyn veiled her new found joys in her own rooms, and Madeleine Bennett's heart leaped up when her husband said in a whisper: "Next week you are to leave quietly to join me, and, we will go away!"

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE LONE HOUSE BY THE LAGOON.

The thin ice of all prudential restraint between Bennett and the fair widow of the golden plumber had melted forever under the abandon of the amatory meeting wherein they had both lost their self-control. In these days of coming summer the signs of the sun god's worshipers were everywhere! The summer "young man" now awaited with beating heart the evolution of the "summer maiden" in all her tricksy glory of fleecy garb and bewitching smiles! The "Must Get Away" Club was abroad, and Seaton Bennett learned to admire the quick decision of his rich inamorata! One long evening of murmured confidences made the whole pathway straight for him. "You see, Seaton!" explained Julie Martyn, "I leave town at once, now, for my villa at Saratoga. I will give you a private address up there for letters and telegrams! You must arrive at the Golden Eagle mine unheralded, before Eckfeldt begins his work. I will give you my *carte blanche* and a power of attorney to handle that investment. From Saratoga, I will work up your political matters! Leave that to me! The election certificate will be my wedding gift to you! We must not be linked together by gossip, for other aspiring men wish to go to Congress from the Nineteenth District! When you come back from Montana, telegraph to me. We can then meet at Schenectady—for even the stones talk gossip and politics at Saratoga! I am watched always—and you may be watched, too, on account of the Prince's Bay experiments. The machinery now down there will be stored by our friend, and we will hold the German Professor safely clutched! He gets no pay for his transfer till you and the staff at the Golden Eagle certify the success of the month's run! If that goes on all well, then 'our run' is a straight 'run in'!

To prevent our being annoyed in any way, take the yacht, cruise around the coast a couple of weeks and then run in to Baltimore. You can go out to Helena, Montana, direct by the St. Louis line, and no one will know where you have gone to. Eckfeldt will do nothing till you arrive. He comes here to-morrow for his final orders, and also, to turn over the keys of the Prince's Bay station. You can have your private mail sent on to the Southern Hotel at St. Louis, and no one will know whither you strike out from there. Eckfeldt does not know that I doubt him, but I will have him shadowed every moment till he reaches our own people at the Golden Eagle!" Bennett wonderingly gazed at her! This was an executive business genius as well as a future society queen! "Are you afraid for your nomination?" the widow queried, seeing his unrest. "Trust that to me! It's more to me than it is to you!" He smiled as he kissed her, carrying a sweet conviction to her soul! "Seaton! You must let me give you some money!" she said, with downcast eyes. "Ah! My pay comes later!" he murmured, "when our interests are one forever!" "I will not be denied!" she resolutely said. "Promise me that you will draw any funds you need from the superintendent of the Golden Eagle! He will have a private letter from me! I own the majority of that stock!" she demurely said. "I do not want money! I want you!" he cried, in an excess of passion! Here was a helpmeet of a royal nature! A very giver of good gifts! "Now, do you see how sensible I am?" she smiled, putting up a stray tress of her rich hair, suddenly disarranged. "You can send your whole personal outfit on the yacht, and no one can ever trace you or me! If the cyanide process succeeds, we will have money to sway the Vanity Fair of Washington and 'do the grand,'" she laughed, breaking away from him. "I must leave you—the servants suspect," she whispered, and only a few passionate kisses were the seal of their last compact. "Remember, the yacht is yours! Send her home from Baltimore, here, to wait for us, later!" was her last laughing sally as she

disappeared. Seaton Bennett sought his club and pondered over the injunctions of the woman who ruled him now! "I have no time now to lose," he decided. "I have to pack, close up my office affairs, get Madeleine out of the way, and make a secret break out of town!" He gazed at his watch. "I think that I will go over and see Doolan!" he finally decided. "I may need some help, and he is the only man I can depend upon! Thank God! I've earned my long vacation, and they are all glad to see me go! But I must get Madeleine out of town first; after that, I will be on the sea in a day! She has got to be silenced until after I am elected! Then, if the cyanide process is a success, what the devil do I care anyway? Julie has a million in sight! With my election certificate in my hand, I can then defy this fool of a female Don Quixote! There's no one to back her up! Bashford!" He trembled as he thought of the chief's rage at any wrong doing toward Philip Ware's daughter! And then the busy devil at his heart laughed again! There was a suggestion so infinitely base that it staggered the traitor for a moment. "If I merely declined to have his cast-off protégée shoved off on me as a wife—Bashford would not then dare to press it publicly! She can't prove her marriage to me, and he will find out that she has deceived him! Yes! It will do! The old man will give her money and so, retire the woman lawyer from public gaze! Perhaps the old boy may marry her! Why not? I can stand it—if the cyanide process is a success! But, what the devil to do with her while I go to Montana? I must plant her in some quiet hole and let her watch herself! Doolan may know of a place where I could isolate her, and I could fool her with the story of a secret speculation, or my taking a trip alone to find a Western location for us!"

Late that night, the budding congressman sat with Red Mike, closeted free from the revel below in the gin palace at Long Island City. And before they slept a plan was evolved which seemed to be impregnable to spying eyes! Bennett and Doolan both knew every

inch of the Sound and the Long Island shores. "I'm going up alone to the Club House at Sag Harbor to get ready for a big season," whispered Red Mike confidentially. "There's a little place there where I can get a house to hide her from the world, for a season! I had it five years ago for a friend—who had a jealous wife. I could easily see she never left there till ye gave the word, if ye can only get her there in quiet! For there's no one to hinder, and I'd put somebody there, to keep the dove in the nest! Think it over!"

Seaton Bennett's dreams were haunted that night! He remained at Long Island City until he had made a suddenly conceived run around Long Island on the railway. Some demon of haste possessed him, for, flying past Hicksville, dashing on to Greenpoint, he gazed upon the splendid expanse of Gardiner's Bay, and was not tempted to dally by the far blue shores of Gardiner's Island, with its flitting white sails, or the splendors of the great palatial hotels of Shelter Island. Back to Manor, and on to Sag Harbor and Amagansett, he hurried. Red Mike Doolan waited only for his return, and the travel-stained lawyer was curt in his replies as he sought a welcome rest in Doolan's palace. "It's all right, Mike! It will do!" he growled. "Wait for me up at the club house! I'll be there inside of a week. I will not dare to write or telegraph. Remember that!" "Did ye see the smallest city in the world? The beautiful burg of Fireplace!" anxiously demanded Doolan. "Yes! I drove over there from Amagansett. It's just the place!" cried Bennett. "Send me up a bottle of brandy and some cigars! I've got to go to town at once! I'll tell you all before I go!"

Bennett snatched a brief rest, and his eyes were bloodshot and haggard when he reached his own rooms in the sheltering dusk of the evening. He had telegraphed to the office the news of his sudden sickness, and he chuckled, as he knew Madeleine Ware would hear of it at once! "She will think that I have been making the secret arrangements! Damn it! I must fool the whole lot!" he cried savagely, "and make an

end of it now!" The busy devil in his heart laughed as the last plans were made with Red Mike. "The cyanide plan will work!" the demon cried. "He may fool them all! His partners, Red Mike, the ambitious widow and the fair-faced wife whom he hates in his heart, but he will never fool me!"

Mr. Seaton Bennett awoke after his wearying race around Long Island to a day of incessant activity. Strange thoughts mingled with his busy projects, the moaning of the winds and wild dash of the waves of Montauk Point seemed yet to echo in his ears as he leaped from his couch. "I have only one last ordeal!" he reflected. "To get Madeleine quietly out of town! Yes! That is the very place! And I will leave them all in a mist! No one will ever know!" He forgot that busy devil in his heart, and with all his tortuous schemes buzzing in his brain, he yet found time to call in at Huyler's and select a beautiful casket of Parisian bon-bons as a first offering to Julie Martyn! A superb basket of flowers accompanied the gift. And he found time also for a little personal purchase, a neat case with some other samples of the confectioner's art, which he carried away in his hand. There was the flavor of peach stones, of bitter almonds, giving a quaint piquancy to one of the dainty layers! And yet he was not a lover of cates and dainties! On his way down Broadway he sent a few hurried last purchases to his rooms, then leaping into a coupé, he sought the office. "I think that I have now all I need! I shall take very little baggage!" he grimly said. "For mine, is not a pleasure trip!" Before he was busied with the closing up of his last office details, he found time to hurriedly whisper to Madeleine Ware: "I will leave early and come over to Mamaroneck by five o'clock. Be sure to meet me!" There was all the glow of the sunrise of love in Madeleine's happy eyes as she whispered: "I am all ready, at a moment's notice!" Counselor Bodley was now eager to see his junior depart for the long vacation. "You have earned it, Bennett!" he cried. "Leave all to me. There's nothing

to keep you! Just get away and enjoy yourself. Remember old heads on young shoulders are not the modern rule! See a bit of life and come back to us 'a new man!' "Oh! I'll see life enough in the Rockies!" laughed Bennett. "By the way," he carelessly said, "please have Withers register my address. Everything to the Southern Hotel, St. Louis! I will telegraph you my arrival there. I may knock around a bit first. I have some business of a private nature to close up. I may perhaps run over to Washington and go out that way! But I will drop in before I go West, if I should be near you here again!"

"You'll find Withers here all summer in charge of Bashford's own affairs," said Bodley. "So just telegraph to him for anything you want. I shall be at Newport for a few weeks!" "Miss Ware?" said Bennett, elevating his eyebrows in well dissembled careless inquiry, as he pointed to the chief's sanctum. "Oh! I think she, too, is going into the country for a long stay. Blake tells me that she thinks of leaving us—of going West!" said the senior. "A fine woman—and very much out of her place here!" kindly concluded the lawyer. "I must say good-bye, then!" remarked Bennett with an air of awakened interest. "That's always the way with these bright girls—they follow on a while and then drop off one by one! The truth is, women have no stamina for a long struggle, and—home is the best place for them!"

Mr. Seaton Bennett found time to give some voluble instructions to Withers, and managed a well-judged public leave taking of the employes generally, which included Miss Ware. This little bit of dumb show impressed the formerly inquisitive typewriter gossip. "There was nothing in that old affair! He doesn't care whether she lives or dies!" ruminated the girl, bending down over her clicking keys. And so, gaily set forth Mr. Seaton Bennett on his summer vacation. "Look here, Withers," he called out, returning from the door, "keep all my mail here a week and then telegraph to the Spottswood House, Baltimore, before you send on

to the Southern. I'll surely be there in two weeks, though—at the Southern." His eyes rested on Madeleine Ware as he went out of the door, and in the tender flash of her wistful eyes, he knew that she would meet him at Mamaroneck!

Sauntering down to the Battery, Mr. Seaton Bennett signaled the captain of the "Raven," and after a conference went swiftly up town to his rooms. "I think I have covered about all!" mused the coming congressman, as he made a toilet with unusual care. He carefully locked away in his dressing valise two singular articles of very little use to a gentleman sporting in the Rocky Mountains. The first was his case of Huyler's selected "French creams"—and, strangely enough, he also took the cigarette case filled with the harmless looking white powder which he had stolen from the unsuspecting Professor Eckfeldt! "He wont miss it, the stupid Dutchy!" laughed Bennett. "He had a dozen quart tins of the stuff!" And then Mr. Bennett whistled gaily to himself as he drove away to spend a parting hour with Mrs. Julie Martyn, ere he kept his tryst at Mamaroneck.

"So, Mr. Eckfeldt is on his way to Montana!" laughed Bennett, as Mrs. Julie Martyn greeted him in the midst of a knot of busy domestics. The signs of the lady's departure were but too evident. "Yes!" cheerfully replied the fair widow, as she led her visitor to the library. "And I leave for Saratoga to-night! Think of anything now that you would say? For—we are watched by the masters of the masters, these prying servants!"

While Bennett pondered the lady unlocked her safe, handed him a little packet. "I insist," she gravely said. "You know not what accidents may happen, and ready money is power! It is the modern 'cure all,' and it makes man and woman go and come, as well as the 'mare' we read of! Listen! If I wish to communicate, I will send one of your three fellow candidates down to the Spottswood House to wait for you! Just telegraph to the Schenectady address!" "Can

you trust to these men?" gloomily said Bennett. Julie Martyn saw the sullen jealousy of his remark. "Seaton!" she cried, fixing her eyes bravely upon him. "Do not mistake my past! As a girl of seventeen, I was forced into all the political intrigues which my husband guided. I shared his secrets, as a loyal wife should! I had to carry on the work he left to me, and I have been necessary to the great secret council of self-crowned rulers here. A woman's signature—a woman's bank account—a woman's holding the papers which none would trust to the jealousy of grasping confederates, has saved many a man whom the people have raved over here! I have been that woman! They all trusted to me! Fear first, confidence next, respect always! Millions have been checked in and out in my name, and when men feared to use the pen themselves, I have done so—for we have been like the Three Guardsmen, 'One for all, and all for one!' That's my whole life mystery! Do you trust me? For, remember, my motto is, 'all in all, or not at all!'"

The lawyer remembered some olden stories of a keen woman intellect dominating the council of the Manhattan Island Star Chamber, a veiled Egeria, to whose grotto the plumed chiefs of Tammany came for rest and wisest counsel! And he remembered, too, that all the nerve of a commanding general was attributed to the one mysterious woman who wore the wampum, and that men bowed to her in reverence and respect!

"Do not mistake me," he softly said. "I thought only of your safety! These men—" "Have all to lose and nothing to gain by betraying me, or secretly following up my footsteps!" interrupted the widow. Her voice was calm, but her blue-veined hands smarted under the cutting of the jeweled rings of price sinking into her clenched fingers!

"I am yours—to the death!" said Bennett, throwing his arms around her! "Tell me only what I shall do!" "You shall go now, at once, and do not linger! There!" she blushing laughed, "wait till the day after election,

and then—tell me all that you would say now! I trust you to the death!” They parted with a last grip of the hands, as when brave men are told off for the forlorn hope assault! For they knew that their pathway in life was one now—to the very death!

Seaton Bennett's face was crimsoned, as with nervous fingers he opened the packet given him by the woman who at seventeen was Queen of the Ring! And she had lived on to ripen in beauty and honor, to glow now in the early summer of a splendid womanhood, while the dethroned czar of the Americus Club slept in a felon's grave—and all his princely courtiers of Belshazzar's house were hunted fugitives or pitiable wrecks! There were a hundred new one hundred dollar bills in the package. It was a sub-treasury envelope! “By God! She has the heart of a lion—she is dead game!” cried Bennett. “For, this money has never moved over a counter!” He recognized the fact that his political future was now in hands firmer and stronger than his own! And then, with a serene face, he hastened away to the New Haven depot. Before he caught sight of the villa studded shores of the Sound he was assured in his heart that the “cyanide process would work!”—and he schooled himself to that display of calm nerve which had so often fascinated an excited jury! He needed all the support of the devil nature within him, for when he wandered away from the little station at Mamaroneck, there, under a spreading chestnut, his Greek-browed wife, Madeleine, waited, with a veil dimly shading her lovely face, and as the ponies sprang away toward their favorite lonely drive, she joyously cried: “And now, Seaton, you are really mine—mine forever! I am all ready for our trip! I must go away at once! Mrs. Walton stays a year longer, and I have just notified my fellow tenants to secure a fourth member in my place!” “What did you tell them, darling?” anxiously cried the startled lawyer. “I said that I might go over to Europe, or perhaps around the world—after I had made some short country visits. I have packed up all my heavy bag-

gage, and have bought a new unmarked trunk, which is all ready for our jaunt. No one can trace me!"

"That's right!" cried Bennett. "I can get you all you need later, and we will repack all your luggage in a large trunk of mine. In this way no one can follow us, until we wish to be relieved of the 'incognito!'"

Happy Madeleine Bennett soon knew that a giant speculation would take him away on a secret quest for a short time—but that he had found out a nest where she could safely await his return! And, when the speculation was successful, they would be at last united heart to heart and far away from all prying eyes! "Then, dearest, before the world you will be at last my openly acknowledged wife!" said Bennett. "For then you will neither ruin your own possible future nor my legal career by any breach of my professional engagements!" The birds sang out gaily on the trees as the happy wife drove along, stealing shy glances at the man whom she loved to honor in her heart! All nature smiled upon them on this happy day, the Greek-browed lady of the splendid eyes and the self-chosen lover of her heart! There was no longer the calm self-poised Portia of the past, the woman who yearned to hear her voice echoed back under the figurative canopy of justice of a crowded court room! It was not the pale-cheeked student who gazed now shyly at Seaton Bennett! It was a loving woman who had forgotten the dreams of the old days of individual ambition! A woman in whose heart the song of birds and murmur of brooks rippled back in echoes of happy love! The answering voice now singing in her heart was the awakened note of love, and all her splendid nature thrilled to its sweet prelude, for the man she loved swept the trembling strings with a master touch! It all seemed so simple, so plain, as they drove back toward the station under the mellow starlight which lovers love, the lamps lit on high by Dame Nature's tender forethought of young life—of first love! "We will be so happy—so happy, Seaton!" murmured Madeleine, as the shrieking whistle of the coming train warned them

of the parting moment! And, as the great light flashed out upon them, blinded in the gloom, Madeleine clung to him, stealing her arms around him, as his cold lips met the rich, full lips of her whom he had sworn to love and cherish. "I will be there! I will meet you—and we shall never be parted again! My husband!" she murmured in a voice which thrilled as sweetly as the song of the lonely nightingale! She was now only a woman, fond, loving and trembling in the thrill of her awakened nature, as she turned her ponies away into the leafy lane. "How he loves me!" she gladly whispered to the listening stars! There was none but the listening stars to hear the gentle orphan's pledge to her own happy heart! "I will make his life a new one! He shall feel the sunlight of love in his heart!" The man who sat crouched in the corner of the car shivered when he hastened to the ferry side to cross over to Long Island City at Thirty-Fourth Street! He walked the deck, as a tiger anxious for its prey, till he leaped off at the Long Island shore. "Where's Doolan?" he hastily demanded of Patsey Casey, who turned a surprised face upon him.

"What's wrong with ye, Counselor?" demanded the Ganymede. "Here! Try a bit of this! Ye look as if ye had seen a ghost! Doolan's away for a couple of weeks! He's up at the club house near Sag Harbor. He left this morning!"

Seaton Bennett moodily threw himself down into a chair in an anteroom, and sat half an hour, with his eyes gazing into vacancy. "It's too late now," he mumbled. "Too late to turn back! 'Red Mike' is waiting for me now!" In his heart he heard again the echoes of a sweet voice, the voice which had breathed those tender words in the parting moments, "We shall never be parted any more!" He strode out to the bar, and his quick, sharp tones aroused Casey from an animated discussion of the merits of "Corbett and Sullivan!" "Tell Doolan that I am sorry not to have seen him! I'm going on to Baltimore and out to St. Louis. I may take a run into the Rocky Mountains. I will write to him from St. Louis."

"Are ye off?" said Casey, as the lawyer buttoned his top coat. "Yes. I take the midnight train for Washington. I have thrown my time away! I thought Doolan was here!" When he strode out into the night Casey said, admiringly: "There's a man! One of the rising ones! He'll put M. C. behind his name soon, if Tammany knows its business!"

Seaton Bennett stood a moment irresolute in his rooms when he reached the solitary haunt of his later bachelor days! He saw his own face in the glass, and, with an oath, he then snatched a telegraph blank. "There is yet time to stop her!" he muttered, and he had added several words to the heading, "Miss Madeleine Ware, Mamaroneck," when, as he drew out a handkerchief, his hand rested upon the bulky envelope of money handed him by Julie Martyn. An electric thrill tingled through his nerves! He dropped the pen and tore the unfinished dispatch slowly into little bits, burning them to ashes. Then, drawing out the packet, he secured it within his inner vestments. "Too late! I've already given Madeleine a thousand dollars of this! And she will be waiting for me there!" He slipped a gleaming revolver into the breast pocket of his top coat, and then, opening his dressing valise carefully, pocketed the still wrapped up cigarette case! He remembered what the babbling Eckfeldt had said: "You hold twenty lives in your hand with a spoonful of this innocent looking powder!" Ringing for the porter, he gave his whole luggage into his charge. "A large carriage, at once, for the Jersey City ferry! I'm going to Baltimore and St. Louis!"

As the man closed the door of the carriage when Bennett had turned over his pass keys, the lawyer sharply said: "Let no one open my rooms but you. I may be away three months!" "And, your letters?" quickly cried the porter, as the horses were whipped up. "Everything to the Southern Hotel, St. Louis!" was the reply, as Bennett closed the door with a crash.

The Counselor found occasion to linger at a telegraph office near the ferry, and when he emerged in

the darkened down town limits he sharply cried: "Drive to the Astor House! I'll go on in the morning train! I must wait here!"

But the Jehu had not reached the Tenderloin on his way home before a fly-by-night hackman pulled up at the door and deposited Bennett's luggage on the yacht pier at the South Ferry. The late hour had not prevented a steam launch from awaiting Bennett's ringing hail: "Raven—Halloo!" and before the day broke the black-hulled schooner was dancing on the freshening seas far out toward Fire Island!

The steward stowing Bennett's baggage marveled at the formidable looking trunk of ultra-American size, covered with labels of every ambitious foreign hotel. It bore a clear ear mark in the letters S. B., New York City, U. S. A. As the taciturn master of this lonely cruise appeared next morning on deck after his solitary breakfast, the sailing master reported for orders. "Just knock about a bit and run over to Montauk Point, Captain!" pleasantly remarked Bennett. "I may want to run into Sag Harbor, and watch the wires for a day or so! Then, I think, I'll take a run down into Chesapeake Bay!" The skipper touched his hat, and so left the man of deeds and parchments standing with his hawk-like eyes fixed upon the low, sandy shores of Long Island, stretching far to the north and east!

While the "Raven" swept on in storm and sunshine, in veering squalls and clinging fogs, Seaton Bennett's fancy veered with the pennant at the masthead. For before he saw Montauk Point loom up, he had run over to Newport and box-hauled around Block Island for a day or so. "This is a genuine refresher, Captain," he murmured in approval, when he stole away from the consideration of some formidable looking papers, extracted from his capacious trunk.

As the saucy "Raven" at last turned her prow toward Montauk, a lonely man, tired of wandering in the deserted gardens of Ware Hall, was seated on the very bench where the modern Portia had first poured out all the ambitions of her untried girlish heart! Hiram Bash-

ford's brow was gloomy as he scanned his morning mail! He loved the little arbor which was now haunted by memories very dear to his chilled heart! "It is strange, strange!" was the chief's last protest as he thrust the letters in his pocket. "Madeleine leaves New York without a word to me; only writes to Bodley to send her mail to Mamaroneck! Flossie Renwick is left as much in the dark as I am—and then, this talk of going abroad! At any rate, she has sought a refuge among strangers for her vacation!" Then a sense of crushing defeat came over him, and he sadly sought the shelter of the study. For Hiram Bashford knew at last that he had lost the confidence of the beautiful orphan in some strangely unexplained way, and he feared that all his plans for her welfare were doomed to utter failure! "God help the poor child! She has built up a wall around her lonely heart, and I must wait till this estrangement comes to an end!" Lonely in his own life—he never dreamed that another life had been merged with hers—and so he turned sadly to the books which he had unwillingly brought to break the monotony of his self-imposed rest! He had studied all the history of the dreamy little state, ninety-six miles long by twenty-two in mean breadth. A sovereign loyal slave state, uncorrupted by wealth, untouched by enterprises, whose only metropolis, Wilmington, has but thirty thousand souls, and whose "gigantic" capital, Dover, but two thousand. Its dozen or more cities being peopled by five hundred. In the sluggish old life before the days of sixty, one man in every five was a black slave. The feudal idea was still lingering on there, and there slavery died a kindly, natural death! While vast Western state sovereignties have leaped into a feverish life, Delaware's non-migrating sons have pursued the even tenor of their sluggish way! The foreigner here makes only the thirteenth of the baker's dozen, and yet one man in every six did not write in 1870, and one in every five was powerless to read! "I can see why Philip Ware rusted to death here, mentally," mused Bashford.

"There's too much Nirvana in this peach-blossomed land! The friction which polishes man against his fellows is wanting! It is a death in life!" The lawyer had curiously peeped at the little out of the way tract of level sandy plains with the few dales and scanty pine tracts fringing its lagoons, and its one great marsh. Without mountains, great rivers or natural mineral wealth—the idle people were as innocent of crime as of purse-proud wealth or electric enterprise! It seemed to be only the unambitious life of the human oyster! "Ah! Madeleine!" mused Bashford. "Your bright ten talents would have been hidden here forever!" He understood the spiritual urging at last which drove the proud girl to face all the dangers of New York's maelstrom! Heredity and environment easily explained the peaceful character of the aboriginal Renappi—Lenno Lenape, or Lenapes—who long suffered that ancient taunt, "the Delawares are women!" For both the excitements of war and the chase were denied them, till Hendrik Hudson, in 1609, came with his ancient ark to bring in the reign of "rum and powder!" Pushed west, after a vain resistance to the whites, the suffering Delawares sadly learned the art of war, and, in a great semicircular path, have been driven, fighting their way against the Six Nations, the Sioux and Chippewas, to mingle at last in the unknown fragmentary tribes withering slowly away in the Indian Territory. And even their birth-place has forgotten them!

Bashford pored over the old records of Godyer and De Vries settlement in 1629 and 1630, for the Dutch West Indian Company; after Lord De la Ware had lightly touched the shores of Delaware Bay in 1610. The one resentful dash of the Indians in 1633 laid the first stockaded homes in ashes, and the brave Swedes and Finns, nothing daunted, in 1637, sailed up Christiana Creek to found Nya Svenga, the only Swedish settlement in America, following the path of the shadowy Vikings! Bashford threaded the quarrels of the

Swedes and Dutch till the Swedes were driven back to Tinicum Island, below the site of Philadelphia.

The mimic war at Fort Casimir saw the Swedish flag succeed the Dutch—and then, from New Amsterdam, the hardy Hollanders attacked New Castle, and, later, deported the conquered Swedes to Europe, their flag leaving our shores forever! But blood-red English flags floated on the ships which the Duke of York sent to proclaim English law, backed by English cannon, along the Delaware in 1664! Lord Baltimore, temporarily grasping—if spiritually sweet—reached over from Maryland and claimed the land up to 40° N. The sly William Penn quickly followed his “spiritual” brother’s lead, and bought from the Duke of York, making his own stronghold at New Castle. When the Lords of Trade and Plantations decided for the lucky quaker—Delaware, for twenty years, was Pennsylvania, for the Pennsylvanians then, as now, wanted the earth, and what is under and over it. Out of this huddle the three historic counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex crystallized into the little state of Delaware, destined to throw off the yoke of Britain later! This pigmy state was the very first to ratify the Constitution, on December 7, 1787, and to adopt its own proud state seal, “Liberty and Independence!” And the old lawyer read in these olden chronicles of the proud record of the Wares of Delaware. Alas! There was nothing left to carry the old line on further now but the brave-hearted girl who had sought “Liberty and Independence” alone in that great theatre of mind, New York City! “What can be her secret designs?” anxiously mused her estranged protector, as he laid down his books and paced the old library in anxious introspection. He gazed around in the silence at the dismantled room where Philip Ware had told him the story of his forebodings. The very bare walls seemed eloquent of the disasters following the old line, for the faces of the colonial dames and county magnates were gone forever from the time-darkened wainscot! A noiseless servant glid-

ed in with letters. The first, a few lines from Madeleine, without date or address, simply told him that she was going into the country for change and rest!

The concluding clause disturbed him. "As I may travel for some weeks, please send any letters to Mamaroneck!" There was no sign of her real purposes, nothing to indicate her feelings, save the firmly traced signature, "Faithfully and gratefully, yours, Madeleine." She had not even written Madeleine Ware! With feverish haste he tore open a note from the lady of Castle Atwater.

"Madeleine has quite curtly refused my pressing invitation for a visit, simply saying that she has other plans, of a business nature, and has left Mamaroneck to travel. But she does not say where! Can you not come over and see me? I fear that there may be something wrong!"

"Something wrong! Something wrong! It is all wrong!" cried Hiram Bashford, in his misery. "She has flatly refused any more money for this year's legal services, saying that I have overpaid her already—and, now, she goes off at a tangent on some mysterious new plan of self-sacrifice or of oblivion hunting! Yes! I have ruined all!" In a bitter self-accusation for roughly pressing his hand and fortune on the friendless orphan, Hiram Bashford at last rightly measured her stubborn pride, that sad, bitter pride, born of dependence. "Damn it all! I'll go to Europe, and stay there, till she needs me! Or—till I am driven back to my work!" He, too, now felt the reaction of the lethargy induced by the dreamy quiet of the sleeping state! With characteristic promptness he sought counsel of Madame Flossie, and in three days he saw Fire Island's shores fade behind him in the gray fog. His last brief injunction to Florence Atwater was forced from him by a vague unrest as to Madeleine Ware's real purposes. "Do everything possible for her in my absence! Use my name, my old friendship, my money, as you will, and if aught is wrong, cable to me at once. My people will instantly obey any wish of yours. I shall confide

in Bodley only. He's a family man, and he will understand me. I have lost the golden thread. You, dear one, may catch it up again. If anyone ever gains her heart confidence again, it will be you alone." And so he had gone sadly away to wander over Europe, an aimless man, shrouded in sorrows and vain regrets. For all the victories of his busy life were naught to him now.

It was the very sweetest face that ever had smiled out upon the shores of Greenpoint which greeted Mrs. Jane Corning, whose cosy parlor bedroom was timidly offered to the "summer boarder" by a modest handbill in her window. Captain Corning's little home by the beach was perched upon a sandy knoll, a mile or more to the east of the railroad station, at the very northeast end of Long Island. The hardy flowers of the little garden, the good wife's pride, delighted the amphibious partner of her bosom. For, when the Menhaden came, Captain Corning sallied forth in his steam fishing boat for the annual harvest. Mrs. Jane Corning's cottage commanded a splendid outlook of Great Peconic, Little Peconic and Gardiner's Bay. The modest tourist, affrighted by the lengthened bills, long-drawn out, of the great fashionable hotels on Shelter Island, came in the time of the hunting and shell fish season to bathe and frolic along this pine-clad sandy spot. Mrs. Corning's house was the very neatest in all the long-drawn-out settlement toward the east. The good lady could see her husband's white sail glittering homeward, and well she knew also the signals of everyone of the dainty yachts dancing there on the blue water. There was a warm welcome at the cottage for the beautiful "stranger lady" who wished "quiet and rest for a few days." Madeleine Ware was secretly awaiting the arrival of her lord from the misty waters of the great deep, and, true to her promise, was anxiously scanning the blue waters of Peconic Bay long before the "Raven" stole in from Montauk Point. The little village, with its tree-bowered cottages, its Brooklyn delegation of modest tourists, its busy foundries,

oil works and fish houses, had no attraction for the stately woman who paced the sands alone and seemed wrapped up in the brooding calm of the golden summer days. Good Mrs. Jane Corning's deft village curiosity was foiled by the modest reserve of the beautiful woman, whose personal belongings indicated a refinement far above all past experience of the little home, placed far away from the prying eyes of the gossipy villagers. A single trunk, without label or letters, and a few portable articles of luggage, made up the slender outfit of the strangely beautiful woman, who seemed to be glad of this peaceful haven, where the distant panorama of the flitting sails alone varied the uneventful days. The fishing captain was away out on the deep, and Mrs. Corning often pondered alone over the character of her beautiful bird of passage. Whether maid, wife or widow, the landlady could not divine. The visitor seemed to her to be either a "theater lady" seeking retirement, perhaps a literary woman, or a principal of some fashionable seminary, stolen away to listen there to the wild waves, always singing the same old song. That no letters or visitors attested any claims of the outer world still further enhanced a growing mystery, and all Mrs. Corning's tentative inquiries met with a dignified but gentle resistance. Neither the arrival of New York, nor the New London daily steamer, attracted the fair guest's attention, nor did she haunt the railway depot. "Her right place would be the Manhassett House," mused the landlady. "She can't be poor." For, though no wedding ring graced the slender hand, Mrs. Corning marked the splendid square sapphire and the two great flashing diamonds, well worth a year's catch of her husband's busy nets. "She's the sweetest thing I ever saw in Suffolk County," mused Mrs. Corning, when she followed the carriage with admiring eyes as this mysterious visitor suddenly departed, as quietly as she had arrived. "I hope you've been satisfied," said the sailor's wife, wiping her hands on her apron to receive a crisp new twenty dollar bill. "Be you goin' to the Manhassett?" For the good

woman well knew it was neither boat nor train time, when the lumbering old country carriage was loaded up with the lady's trunk and belongings.

"I have finished my little play spell," smiled Madeleine Ware, with a gentle evasion. Her heart was beating in a delightful anticipation, for an hour before she had marked the coming white sails of a splendid schooner yacht driving along with a large American flag flying gaily at her foremast. The dandified yachtsmen gazing at the craft laughed at this lubber who carried the national ensign at his foremast. But to one who watched the graceful boat swing around and come daintily up as the anchor chain ran out, and the sails rattled down, that fluttering flag was the signal of a new life. The pledge of one whom her loving heart leaped up now to welcome with its royal first love. The streets of the pretty little town were filled with knots of merry summer loiterers as the carriage toiled along over the sandy roads leading to the steamer wharf.

"You've missed to-day's boat, Madame," said the Jehu, as he shouldered Madeleine's trunk and deposited her parcels in the waiting room.

The stars only gleamed upon the darkened waters as a couple of sturdy sailors bore the lady's luggage, four hours later, to a waiting cutter. Madeleine was deeply veiled to baffle the night fog, and the steamer porter only looked at the two dollar bill he thankfully received. Already the swift cutter was dashing away far over the waters of the tranquil bay when breathless Mrs. Corning appeared with a small portmanteau in her hand.

"Very sorry, mum. Can't tell you nothin'. There's fifty yachts now layin' here, and their boats swarm around like porpoises. You'll have to wait till to-morrow to find her. Maybe she'll remember and send back for it. She was a real lady, for she gave me a two dollar bill," said the thankful trunk smasher.

And Mrs. Jane Corning, long days after, waited in vain, for the sweet-faced woman never came back. Her

slender hand never again unfastened the lock of the portmanteau left behind in her hasty flitting.

For the black-hulled "Raven" was now far away, dashing over the star-lit waters, driving on under full sail, to where Sag Harbor clings to the shelter of bleak Montauk Point, fencing off the wild Atlantic billows.

When Seaton Bennett handed the veiled lady over the side of the "Raven" there was no one of the clustering crew who saw aught but the graceful form of a stately woman, a tall daughter of the gods. Bennett's curt order, "Get under way," caused them to spring to their posts, and the swinging cabin lamps only lit up with their soft radiance the husband and wife, whose eyes looked love into each other's burning glances after all these anxious days of watching.

Madeleine Ware was Madeleine Bennett at last! For were they not alone, out on the starry sea, and with only the gentle ripple of the dancing waves keeping tune to their beating hearts. The beautiful orphan laughed happily as the lover husband told her of the safe retreat which he had found. "A perfect love in idleness. I chanced on it by a mere accident, and you shall there have time to tell me all you wish, to frame every future plan, while I leave you only for a few days to watch this giant speculation. If it comes out right, then our fortune is nearer than I ever dared before to hope—fame we will work for together."

Madeleine listened to all these words of love and cheer, and it seemed as if some subtle spirit of fire and flame had transfigured her at last into a glowing Venus. For this night, he was all her own! There was no world to vex them, no haunting cares near, no clinging shadows over the rosy future. And the present was so royal in its loosening of the love swelling up in her noble wifely heart.

"Seaton," she whispered, as they sped along past the gleaming lights of Shelter Island. They were watching the golden sparkling phosphor waves break in showers of light and fade away behind them in the foamy wake.

"There is but one who must know of my happiness. But one, in the wide world. Florence Renwick is the one who once shared my every thought. You have my whole heart, but I must tell her, only her, how happy I am."

Bennett's voice was tender as he said, "You shall write to-morrow. I will mail the letter, for I send the yacht away when we land. Only remember your promise. We are incognito till I return. Then all will be as you wish. But I must not be traced till I have watched the great speculation. After that the whole world is ours to choose from."

And so there was not a shadow on her happiness as they were rowed away in the night to the sleeping shores of the Sag Harbor village.

In a covered carriage, followed by a heavy wagon with their luggage, the runaway married lovers drove smartly away along the sandy shores toward the lonely reaches of Montauk Point. The "Raven" had even then flitted away far out toward the coming day-break, when Seaton Bennett, at last, awakened his sleeping wife by kissing her drooping eyelids.

"Here we are, darling. It is the end of the journey, and you are at home."

The happy woman's slumber laden eyes closed in a quaintly furnished old sleeping chamber, where a brightly flaming fire of pine logs threw a cheerful radiance into the dusky corners.

"I must see to our effects," whispered Bennett, whose tired wife had murmured, "I am so happy, Seaton, to be here with you—at last."

There was no one waiting for the master of this Castle Lonesome below but the stalwart "Red Mike." He was now clad in rough attire and no diamond blazed from his bosom as of yore. Doolan led Seaton Bennett into a little room, where food and drink was set out upon a butler's table. He then carefully closed and locked two doors, cutting off the upper portion of the lonely house.

"I've sent the boy back to the town, and he has seen nothing," gruffly began Doolan.

"Who's here beside yourself?" was Seaton's anxious query.

"No one but the old Shinnecock Indian woman cook. She can get you up a pretty fair meal, and I'll serve it. Will you be here long?"

"Not long," curtly replied Bennett, starting up as the night wind drove the splash of a sudden rainstorm in rattling gusts against the windows. "Does the old woman speak English?" the lawyer questioned, avoiding Doolan's eyes.

"Only a bit of Indian jargon," roughly replied Mike. "And, when not at her work she's always half drunk. The boys call her 'Crazy Ann.'"

"Is there anyone in the other house?" timidly demanded Bennett.

"Not a soul," replied Mike. "It's locked and the windows are all boarded up. The last of the old family are in Europe, two minor children being educated. No one ever comes here. This place only has a prospective value if Austin Corbin ever realizes his dream of an ocean line from Montauk Point to Europe."

The two men gazed at each other in a meaning silence, and Doolan sullenly took a three-fingered dram. "Where's the yacht?" he hoarsely whispered.

"Off for her mooring at the Battery to await orders," Bennett sighed in relief, as Doolan growled, "I'll turn in. When do you intend to leave?"

"Oh, in a few days," uneasily replied Bennett.

"I've got to be back in Long Island City by a week from to-day," energetically said Doolan, as he handed the lawyer a bedroom candle. "I've a damned lawsuit coming on there."

"That will be all right," slowly said Bennett, as their eyes met. "She's coming round and I think I can buy her off."

"The best way," grunted Doolan as he disappeared.

Bennett then climbed the stairway and softly locked the door of a room adjoining the chamber where his

happy wife now slept the dreamless sleep of innocence. He laid a loaded revolver beside his candle on the table. "Just as well to have no accidents," he mused. "I'll fool them all. Doolan will never know that the yacht will wait for me at Cape May. Then, once there, a straight run for the Rockies!"

In five minutes, the lonely old house by the lagoon was wrapped in silence and darkness.

CHAPTER X.

MISSING!

The morning sun gleamed over the roughened green waves of the mist-covered waters of the bay with a reddish glare and lit up the long sand paths stretching out, gray and gaunt, with their straggling patches of scattered pines.

Gull and curlew screamed wildly, flapping along over the smooth surface of the lonely lagoon, where two dreary looking old stone houses seemed to accentuate each other's isolation from a busy world. A far away flitting white sail alone was visible to sweet Madeleine Bennett as she drew back the curtains of her room late on the morning after her strange night ride.

It seemed to be all a dream. The faded glories of the solid old abode, the quaint belongings of the vast room, and even the eerie face of the old Indian woman who clattered in and silently trimmed the fire. The loving morning greeting of her handsome husband alone dispelled the illusion that she had wandered away into another world.

Seated at a cosy breakfast table, set out in the vast old dining room on the first floor, Seaton Bennett, with an amused interest, told her all the story of the

very smallest village in the world. "When you have had a look over the old place you will understand its romantic charm. These two houses were built after the War of 1812 by two brothers of an old colonial family, who had once a splendid manorial homestead on Gardiner's Island over there." He pointed through the diamonded window to the far blue shore hovering faintly far out at sea. "They often came here to enjoy the hunting and fishing, offering them rare sport. These two old mansions are solid and time-defying, and I legally control the estate, for there are only some absent infant heirs to represent the old line. I'll have a pretty sailboat sent up here and take you up to Montauk and then over to Gardiner's Island. It's too shallow for the yacht here. There's a nice carriage and two horses. My man will drive you around daily and I'll also send you a good maid up here. Be sure that you tell her nothing."

Madeleine smiled as she poured out the tea. "Trust to me a little longer. You have trusted me so long," was her happy reply.

"The old Gardiner family bought the island out there and a vast tract here from the Shinnecock Indians as cheaply as the sainted William Penn and the thrifty Dutch got their lands," laughed Bennett, who was in the very highest spirits. "They used these two mansions when they came over from Gardiner's Island to attend the routs and festivals of the hospitable gentry further down Long Island, and here they held high revel. There's the old boat landing and fire beacon where they often signalled for their boat and called their retainers over from Gardiner's Island with a pillar of fire by night and a column of smoke by day. We'll go the rounds. Can you be content here for a couple of weeks? The man will bring you all the papers and any needed supplies from town, and I'm sending them into the village (the butler and cook) for marketing to-day. Do you wish anything?"

"I shall be busy enough with my first voyage of dis-

covery and all my unpacking," answered Madeleine. "When must you go away, Seaton?"

Her husband's voice trembled as he said, "If I can make you comfortable, I will leave to-morrow morning early. I have to drive some twenty miles to the train. I will only take a portmanteau with me, and the man will bring you back anything you wish from Sag Harbor."

They had wandered out and roved over the deserted tiny village of two houses and stood together at the old beacon which gave the quaint name of Fireplace to the diminutive hamlet.

"I am a little chilly. Let us go in," said Madeleine. "We have measured out all our possessions, and I must now begin my 'first housekeeping.' You will be surprised with the first list of articles 'indispensable to your wife.'"

He fondly kissed her rosy lips and they wandered back, arm in arm, to the lone house by the lagoon.

"I have some letters to write," said the lover-husband, as Madeleine directed the Indian woman in the unstrapping of her trunk and the disposition of her luggage. "If you will now write your letter to Mrs. Renwick I can mail it at Sag Harbor."

"Ah, I'll not forget Florence," cried Madeleine Bennett, as she hastened the temporary arrangement of her effects.

Happy Madeleine Bennett, with all the freedom of an escaped school girl, had ransacked the old mansion from attic to cellar long before her husband had arranged his "important correspondence." She had timidly peeped often in to see him seated with the papers from his opened trunk scattered over a writing table drawn up by the window. Her own little trousseau de voyage was now all in order and the creaking doors of the old mahogany presses received her simple traveling finery. A sudden annoyance brought a shade to her face when the light-hearted wife discovered the loss of one of her portmanteaus. She stole back to the door of Seaton Bennett's room on tip-toe.

"I'll not annoy him now about this trifling loss. He is working—working for me," she proudly remembered, and she stole back, with the smile of an angel on her glowing face. "I am so glad that I took my letters and my wedding ring out," she mused, as she shaded her happy face from the dancing flames of the pine logs with her rosy palms. There on the marriage finger now gleamed the plain golden band with the initials and the date of that simple wedding in far away Magnolia. "I can easily write to Mrs. Corning," she thought, as she vaguely tried to recall the composition of the contents of the missing bag. "Better not," she decided, "not till Seaton returns and all is safe." Then, with a sudden inspiration, she sat down and wrote a few loving lines to that unforgotten heart comrade, "Mrs. Florence Renwick." "Dear Flossie," mused Madeleine Bennett, as she vainly searched for her wax and seal. "She will know how happy I am, and that she is the first, the very first, to know all." Then she remembered that her seal and other furnishings were in the missing bag. "I will give this to Seaton," she decided, but sank back into a chair, for she well knew the man and the old Indian servitor had departed for the distant town of Sag Harbor. "How happy I am! How happy!" she murmured as she sat there with the fire-light gleaming on her fair young face, while outside the fresh gale rattled the shutters of the massive old homestead. She could hear her husband now pacing his room with quick, manly strides. "He is studying, planning, striving for me," she proudly thought, and then Seaton Bennett's words came to her. "One last struggle for fortune and then the whole world is ours." The days of her happy girlhood drifted by, brought back to memory with the long years of aspiration and struggle, the storm cloud of death and ruin lowering over the old home by the Delaware, Shearer's villainy, her father's untimely death, and all of Hiram Bashford's unselfish kindness. "It is a strange, strange world," she sighed, as she called up the ambitious dreams of the modern Portia. "I must write to Hiram Bashford. I must

tell him that I have found at last the woman's kingdom; that its name is home; that its compass is a husband's heart." Her proud head was bowed as she smilingly murmured, "Love is enough. Yes, love is enough," and, thinking of the man whose strong arms now fenced her from the whole world, she softly said to herself, smiling as she listened to his echoing footsteps, "Whither thou goest, I will go, and thy people shall be my people."

Seaton Bennett had concluded an hour's final investigation of the Cyanide process, when he came reluctantly from his room, summoned to a collation by his merry wife. "I had only the tea to make. You have been working and the servants may be late for dinner. It is a long drive over to the town, you tell me." While they sat alone in the old house, haunted with all its memories of vanished generations, of fresh hearts that had failed long years before, Bennett's pale face and monosyllabic answers alarmed the matron of a day. "You have tired yourself with your study, with your writing incessantly," said Madeleine, as they wandered back to the upper story, with its cheerful furnishings and picturesque glimpses of the varied shores fringing the silent lagoon.

"Here is the letter for Florence Renwick," said Madeleine, as she emerged from her own apartment. "Do not forget to mail it to-morrow when you go to the city."

Bennett took the letter in silence and placed it with care in his pocketbook. He came out of his room, hat and top coat in hand. "I'll try a little exercise, a walk by the beach," he said, turning his eyes away to where the afternoon shadows now lay darkly to the east behind the scattered sand dunes. "I forgot," he said, "I had brought you some bon bons."

Madeleine Bennett took the little packet and then waved him a laughing adieu as he turned when twenty paces from the great hall door.

Seaton Bennett stood there with his limbs trembling under him as he gazed out to the west and saw a black

speck a league away crawling down the lean-ribbed sands toward the mimic town of Fireplace. "It is the team coming back," he faltered with pallid lips, and then he slowly turned toward the old stone house where he had left the woman whom he had sworn to love, honor and cherish till death should part them! He dared not retrace his steps. He feared to go forward. His heart smote him, and he covered his eyes with his hands as a single, faint, agonizing cry reached his ears. For, an upper window had been hastily flung open and the husband had seen for one awful moment, a white-robed form there at the window of his own room.

And then all was still but the wailing of the winds whistling by and the beating of his own agonized heart. He was rooted to the spot, and the fear of discovery alone made him crawl toward the house, as he could see a few hundred yards away the wagon returning. There was but one form now on the box seat. The old Indian woman was not there. With the frantic haste of a Cain, Seaton Bennett dashed back into the deserted house and glided up the old oaken stairs. There was no sound, no loving voice to welcome him. He called out, and his voice echoed like the wail of a wild beast in distress. Silence! Silence!

And there, with a palsied heart, he listened to the echo of his own inarticulate cry and the hollow ticking of an old clock. He dashed into the room whence his girl wife had staggered to the window, in a last appeal for help. The room was vacant and the fire-light now played upon the hearth in merry mockery.

There on the table was the dainty little French bon bon case from Huyler's. The case which had been packed up with the cigarette box which he had hidden for weeks from all men's sight. The lid was raised and two or three of the first layer bon bons were missing. With a swift movement, he hurled the little box into the heart of the fierce fire blazing there on the old hearth. He glared around like a hunted beast at bay.

The rattling of wheels at a distance now sounded on

his ears from below, for the great door was swung wide open. Bennett paused, white-faced, a moment at the door of his own room and then, one glance within, sent him forth, shuddering in a horrible reaction of fear and remorse. For, prone upon the floor of his room, lay something still and with outspread arms, the fingers still clutching at the carpet beneath.

There was nothing left of Madeleine Ware—beautiful Madeleine Bennett, the wife of two happy days, but the majestic memory of her inviolate womanhood, the dying thrill of her wifely love, and that marble-faced shell of rarest mould, whence the loving spirit had fled forever. It was done!

There was a devil, a grinning Moloch, in the silent recesses of the cowardly scoundrel's heart that echoed back a hollow groan in grinning mockery, "The Cyanide process is a success."

For, while he could still hear her bosom heaving in love's fondest sighs, the man who saw beyond the river of Death the gleaming marble Capitol arise had deftly introduced the white powder stolen from the innocent metallurgist into the upper layers of the sweet meats.

Seaton Bennett, tiger-like fiend, and coward at heart, could only cry out as Red Mike drove up alone, "Don't go in there! Wait for me! There's been a terrible happening."

"What is it?" yelled the startled rascal, bringing the horses up with a jerk, throwing them on their haunches, and jamming the brake on hard.

"She's in there; it's all over, I fear. Heart disease! I am afraid!" faltered Seaton Bennett, turning his head away.

"Good God!" yelled Doolan, springing from his seat and grappling Bennett as he alighted in the soft sand at the side of the cowardly murderer. "What's this? Have you killed the poor girl?" And the gleam of a revolver barrel shone before Bennett's staring eyes. "Walk in there before me," sternly said Doolan. "Move quick, or I'll blow your damned head off! I'm not

going to hang for the likes of you." And up the silent hallway the frightened rounder forced the shivering villain who had so deftly "fooled them all." "Where is she?" demanded Doolan, who had locked the great front hall door and pocketed the key. Bennett mutely pointed to the door of his own room as they stood at the head of the stairs. Red Mike pushed the cringing villain into the room, whence his trusting wife had only come forth to die alone, with his name on her loving lips. After a few moments, the saloonkeeper strode back into the wife's apartment. He dragged the shrinking lawyer by main force into the front room. There on the one couch was something which looked like a sleeping queen in marble, lying there with her folded hands crossed upon her pulseless heart. There was a napkin veiling the lovely face, now grown waxen in death. "There's your work, and I'll not lose you from sight," sternly cried the frightened Irishman. "Maybe we'll both hang for this."

The burly Celt had picked up Bennett's own pistol from the table and he now had a weapon in each hand, as he demanded: "Now, give me your living story."

It was an agony for the scoundrel husband to force his words through his chattering teeth. "I was away walking. It was a sudden seizure! I found the door open, and I then rushed out to meet you. It happened while I was out."

Doolan gazed doubtingly as the villain fought for his life.

"Where is the Indian woman?" babbled Bennett.

"Dead drunk at the village, thank God!" cried Red Mike, as he rose and thrust Bennett into Madeleine's vacant room. "If you move, I'll butcher you!" he growled as he stood on the hallway landing, where he could see them both, the living husband and the dead wife, queenly in the majesty of her self-sacrifice. "Was she your wife?" demanded Doolan.

The bowed figure cowering before him quivered as Bennett shook his head.

"God rest her soul. She had a lovely face!" mut-

tered the repentant Irishman. "Is there anyone to miss this poor girl?" suddenly said Doolan, as a fishing boat darted up to the old beacon landing, in plain view. "Here's a boat coming up to the old wharf."

"No one," cried Seaton Bennett, starting up in a wild alarm. "My God, Doolan! We must get out of this."

The excited Irishman was already peering out of the hall window, and he sprang to the door where the murdered wife lay, locking it and pocketing the key. "Come down here and watch the front door, Bennett," he sternly said. "Our lives depend on it. Yours, anyway," he grimly finished.

The cowardly murderer sneaked down stairs after Red Mike. At the door he whined, "Give me one of the pistols," as he caught Red Mike's arm.

"Never, you fool!" was the rough answer. "Stand in there, with the door locked, till I hail ye. I'll get these men away."

"For God's sake, don't leave me alone here—with her," faltered Bennett.

The strong man cast him off and then strode down along the sandy footpath, for the strangers were already within a hundred yards. Red Mike's burly form and harsh voice soon impressed the two castaway amateur fishermen. "There's nothing here to eat and no supplies," he bluntly said. "I'm looking at this old place with a view to purchase. Ye'd better make for Sag Harbor."

"But there's a fire in there; we might rest and warm ourselves," pleaded one of the city castaways.

"That's none of your business," truculently answered Doolan. "I've strict orders from the agents to let no one enter the premises." While Doolan watched the crestfallen men embark he keenly revolved every side of the situation. "I could never prove it on him. Maybe it'll blow over. But, I'll keep a deadly hold over the scoundrel. There's been some dark business done here."

Before Mike commanded the opening of the door he

way to lift the mortgage which had hung over the palace for several weary years. He motioned into the dining room, where the vacant chair head of the table still spoke of the hapless orphan girl. "Not there," shrinkingly cried Bennett. "Our own room," and he sneaked into Doolan's

room to me," cried Mike. "Yer a fool. Ye've no good. We have both got to get out of here. What's your plan?"

John Bennett had already conned over his chances before. "Let us go out and release and feed the

Then I can drive down to Sag Harbor and bring you here. I can send the team back by the boy—Johnny—the one you brought to help you. You can be ready when he comes back. I will get right out into the Rockies. You can go home to-morrow and no one ever will know."

The ferret eyes of Red Mike gleamed out fiercely as he said, "And, ye cur, ye leave this whole affair on my shoulders alone."

"Then, Doolan," pleaded Bennett. "I must get away from here, to be out at St. Louis, to telegraph back from there. It will save you. No one saw us come here in the night, no one on the yacht even saw the girl. And the boat's now at anchor off the Battery at New York and the crew are all dismissed on leave for two weeks. I'll stand by you forever."

"What am I to do left alone here?" grimly demanded Mike.

John Bennett drew him to a window. He whispered, "To-night you must hide it forever out there in the sand ravines. The wind blows tons of sand down the lowest side yearly. It'll never be found."

Doolan mixed a glass of grog and then lit a cigar. "What do ye trunks, all yer things?" he growled.

"I'll take all of her things, even the trunk," whispered John Bennett, "and pile all of my things, everything into my big trunk. I left it half empty so that the baggage could go in there. I was going to take

her out West, I was, so help me God! But, she was willing to take money and go to Europe. I can prove it," pleaded Bennett. "I brought the money along. I never meant her any harm, Mike. We must stick together. Think of the election, of the Congressional fight. There's big money ahead for you."

"Yer a pretty Congressman, ye damned sneak," growled Doolan. "I'm sorry to see Mrs. Martyn loaded down with ye. But we're in the same boat. There's two of us in it. Now, harken, Bennett. Ye know well I'm a high man of the Clan Na Gael. I'll save yer dirty life, to save my own. I may clear this thing up and run over to Ireland for a couple of months, till the thing blows over. I can do some work for The Cause there. Now, answer me truly! If ye lie to me, yer not safe in any corner of the world. D'ye remember what became of Cronin out at Chicago? What money have ye with ye? Ye brought some for the girl, ye say?"

"I can give you five thousand dollars," earnestly pleaded Bennett, "and she had a thousand in her possession that I gave her ten days ago."

"I'll not rob the dead," gloomily replied Red Mike. "It's only to save my own neck I'll touch that poor lonely girl, and, as God is my judge, I'll treat her as if she were my sister. You can give me a check for ten thousand dollars besides, dated St. Louis, two weeks from now. From there ye can write back to yer bank to certify it for me. I'll pay that down on my mortgage. It'll look like regular business, and I can give ye a receipt for a loan any time, to cover all our tracks."

"And you will do all, then, and let me go?" joyously cried Seaton Bennett.

"Yes, yes," answered Doolan. "Get yerself ready. I'll feed the horses. Leave all as it is. Now, hurry, so ye can start in an hour."

"Mike," whispered the cowardly, plotting wretch who had made the "Cyanide process" a success, "I must go into my room. To get you the money. You know—"

Doolan strode up the stairs and returned in a few moments with a pallid face. For he had borne the painful sacrifice on Love's altar back to her own room, to the chamber where the white powder, hidden in the heart of the bon bons, had done its almost lighting work. "Go up now, ye coward, and be ready to get out of here. I'm sick of seeing you under the same roof that covers her."

In half an hour the men faced each other at the table again in the butler's room. There was a red flush on Eaton Bennett's cheeks now, for he had found the way to the brandy bottle. "I have all the things I want to take. Here is your money and here is your check. It will be certified and paid. There's but one thing, Mike, beg you to do, to save both our lives. Here is a letter. Mail this back to the United States at Liverpool when you land. Make no mistake. It is undated, and it will turn all her friends' eyes to Europe. They will think that she is over there."

"Ah, yer a smart devil," cried Doolan. "Was this an accident?" he fiercely cried.

"Yes. It was arranged between us that she should mail it after she got her money. She was going away to Europe contented."

"I believe ye lie," was Doolan's ugly rejoinder, "but the luck's with ye, and the lie goes! What'll I do with yer traps?"

"Throw all into the trunk and check it to Long Island City when you go down to-morrow night. Send me the check to the Southern Hotel, St. Louis. I'll have my janitor store the trunk in my rooms till I return. He will get it at the baggage office. Don't fail. The papers in there are valuable."

"It's a good scheme," said Doolan, as he thrust the money and check into his bosom. "Now, it's half past six. It will be dark when ye get to Sag Harbor. Ye'll find the boy at Donovan's saloon there, 'The Harp of Erin.' Tell him to rest the horses and come right back here to me, and bid him, too, bring some good whisky and cigars. I'll be all ready to clear out when he comes.

Yes, and send a good basket of lunch, too. Write me always to Long Island City. Casey will forward all. I'll mail yer letter from Liverpool. Now, do you get to St. Louis and telegraph back to Mrs. Martyn as soon as ye can. It may save yer neck, for, mind ye, Mr. Congressman, I won't risk mine."

There was no one to see the leave taking of the frightened scoundrel, who grasped the reins eagerly, as Red Mike threw Bennett's smaller luggage into the wagon.

"Mike," begged Bennett, "for God's sake, clear all up. And, give me one of the pistols."

"Drive on, you fool. You have all the whisky with ye. I'll keep yer pistol."

And the would-be Honorable Seaton Bennett, M. C., lashed the fretting horses and drove away, never once turning his head. There was one that went out with him on the long and dreary road. The pale shade of a beautiful, loving woman, with her arms outstretched to the flying murderer in a wife's appeal for aid, and the wailing gusts of the night wind brought back to his ears that last agonizing cry, "Help! Seaton! Help!" The devil in his heart laughed as the fiend whispered, "He is mine forevermore. I have fooled them all."

Red Mike carefully reconnoitered every opening of the dreary old stone mansion and then sprang at his work. The whole upper part of the house was first examined and he made sure that no token of the presence of the lost lady was left there to betray them later. Then, in feverish eagerness, he gathered up all of Seaton Bennett's belongings below stairs, dragging down his great trunk into the butler's room. Hour by hour he labored on till there was nothing left above him but the beautiful clay, the waxen image of the loving one who had gone out on the dark seas of Death through the golden gates of Love.

The booming of a distant fog bell struck terror to Red Mike's heart. He had been trained in youth, in the far Galway mountains, to mind the Angelus, and this lonely night, as the waters rose and swelled and

the gray mists shrouded the lonely sandy shores, he shuddered as he listened to the hoarse cries of the wild sea mews.

"It's a fearful burial for a departed Christian, to be hidden like a dead dog in these sand dunes," he faltered. And then, new fears came to vex him. He had foolishly allowed Seaton Bennett to escape. If Bennett were to denounce him! "I've the weapons and the money. My God, I was mad to let him go!"

Michael Doolan paced the floor for hours, and then strange thoughts came to him. "This wretch may hold the secret over me. If he were even to denounce me now. Fool! He has tracked me, and I dare not even tell the boy." He picked up the light and, pistol in hand, went all over the old house again, for strange spirits of the night wailed and shrieked a requiem over murdered innocence there, where love's fair flower lay slain by the felon hand of a scoundrel husband. The greatest task lay before him yet. And Red Mike shuddered when he realized that if men should find her body in the sand dunes later, that he might pay with his life for a fatal mistake. His brows were damp with cold drops as he saw the future, now black with gathering terrors. "How am I to do it? I'll not bury her like a dog. And I am innocent of her death. If I had help—some one whom I could trust." He nervously sought to assure himself of the safety of the five thousand dollars—the love offering of the ambitious widow of the golden plumber. "This will take me to Ireland and back, but, how to get there?" He stooped and picked up a card which had fallen. He cried, "By God! I have it! Safe! Safe at last!" For a dirty little pasteboard in his trembling fingers bore the name of

JAMES T. DEVLIN,
Funeral Director,
Long Island City.

Red Mike sat for an hour raking the last ashes of the dying fire together in the chamber of the dead.

"There must be no accident here," he murmured in a dazed way. For a new scheme had been woven in his busy brain. "It will be a hold on him. Devlin is a Clan-Na-Gael man, and I'm president of the society that gives him all his business. The old man is simple. I can trust to him. There's plenty of money in the scheme, and there'll be two of us in it. Besides, Devlin is poor."

Something caught the eye of the frightened saloon-keeper as he raked the last ashes of the hearth together. He stooped and drew out on the old brick hearth a half melted golden cigarette case. A cunning look flashed from his eyes as he went below and returned with an ewer of water. There was no spark of fire left lingering there, as he locked the door and then went below with his trophy. "That scoundrel threw this in there to be destroyed, and the ashes covered it partly. There's been foul play! I'll have no mercy on him now."

The gray dawn was breaking as a boy drove up with the returning team. Red Mike's plans were made at last, and his brow was serene as he bade the boy feed the horses and be ready to return at once to Sag Harbor. "There's a fifty dollar bill for you if you get old Jim on the train to-night," said Doolan, as the boy was at last ready to return. "Stay at Long Island City and wait there for me. I'll be home to-morrow night. Tell Donovan to let Devlin drive the team out at once. I want to see him alone on some business. There's whisky and cigars and lunch enough here for a dozen. Now, fly away wid ye." The boy never looked behind as he rattled away, for a twenty dollar bill was in his pocket, and there were fifty more ahead to earn.

Mr. Michael Doolan cast about him as the lad disappeared from view and soon noted an old coast survey station behind the house where the murdered Madeleine Bennett now lay alone in the silent majesty of Death. For an hour he toiled away there with pick and spade and before noon he dragged out a heavy, bright, new trunk from the house, and carefully tamp-

ing the sand over it, smoothed down the surface of the pillock. Seated there, keenly watching the entourage, he rested a half hour. The comfort of a flask and cigar was not denied. "Now, Mr. Bennett, M. C. to be," cried Red Mike, "there's yer trousseau and the poor lady's lothes all hidden for good—till I need them. Yer own valuable papers I'll just file in my valise, and I think that my safe deposit box is big enough for them. Now for Devlin. I have fooled the scoundrel!"

Mr. Doolan little recked that under the same afternoon sun, Seaton Bennett, Esq., counselor at law, was on the "Raven," now gliding out of Cape May harbor, he having promptly and gleefully telegraphed to the air widow at Saratoga. "Can you make Baltimore to-morrow night, captain?" said Bennett.

"Easy enough," was the answer, and then the lawyer chuckled, "I have fooled them all," as the swift "Raven" dashed along toward Cape Charles.

Before the legal gentleman had registered his name at the Spottswood House, Baltimore, simple old Jimmy Devlin had stolen back to Long Island City from Sag Harbor. He had achieved a secret professional work in fear. He was a bit paler than his wont, and five of Mrs. Julie Martyn's new one hundred dollar bills were in his leather wallet.

"It's all right, Devlin," said Red Mike when the undertaker left the old house at Fireplace. "The gentleman landed from his yacht, and he's only fled away to avoid any scandal. I'll hold you clear of all trouble, and there's a thousand dollars for ye, if the friends find all safe and right, in a year's time."

"It'll be the same in two years, ye can depend on it!" said Devlin, as he whipped up the horses.

"Be sure to have Donovan send the baggage wagon back with the team at once," was Red Mike's last mandate.

Mr. Seaton Bennett was flying along on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad toward Cincinnati, when Michael Doolan, Esq., himself drove up to the "Harp of Erin" in Sag Harbor. There was no tenant now at

the old mansion in the little microscopic village of Fireplace—nothing but the haunting silence of the forgotten years.

Mr. Doolan had again gone over the whole mansion with the greatest care. Not even a strayed ribbon, not a single graceful glove, moulded by her slender hand, was left to speak in an eloquent silence of the loving-hearted woman who had found the grim summons waiting her in the lonely rooms of the dreary mansion. An awful summons!

"That's a terrible heavy trunk," growled the country driver as he bade Doolan aid him with the great package marked S. B., New York City. "Yes. Books is heavy enough," grunted Doolan, springing into the light buggy, where Donovan's boy waited him. "Drive on steady and mind my lead."

The trunk was carefully bound and lashed with many a knotted rope, and Mr. Doolan's eye never failed to note the progress of the team behind him till the old whaling village was reached at last. Mr. Michael Doolan was well known to nearly all the officials of the railway, whose coffers were filled generously by the annual outings of the "Long Island Sporting Club." Not till he had purchased his ticket and carefully checked the heavy trunk of books did Red Mike depart to "foregather" an hour or so with his old crony, Donovan.

"That's a whopper," said Bill Wilkins, the baggage-master, as he wheeled Red Mike's trunk to the baggage car and with much toil saw it therein bestowed. "Here's your check, Mr. Doolan," remarked Wilkins. "I'll charge you no extra, but you gain a hundred pounds on us this time." While Bill Wilkins, reinforced with a good dram and a pocketful of cigars, wandered down to the switch tender's box, Red Mike deftly slipped an extra check strap and duplicate brass tags off the rack before him. "I may have use for these later," he grinned. "Sure, the company can stand it. They've got plenty." And then the partner of Seaton Bennett's secret sought out the "Harp of Erin," for he felt at last

a sense of personal safety and a foretaste of coming power. "I have him—'dead to rights,'" grinned Doolan, as he "swopped the time of day" with his political ally, Donovan.

It was with the greatest care that Doolan saw his luggage transferred at Babylon, when he had gladly left behind the little twenty hundred tumble-down town of Sag Harbor. Its fine haven of splendid anchorage no longer was crowded with the old-time whalers peopled by their polyglot crews going to the weird antipodes in search of the giant right whale. The sons of the old skippers, boat steerers and harpooners were now busied in the service of the growing crowds of summer visitors or toiling in the cotton and flour mills, the paper works and cigar factories.

"Damn me, if I ever cast eyes on Montauk Point again," growled Red Mike, as he dodged out of the open baggage car at Babylon, where he had lingered for several weary hours at that modern "Mugby Junction." Red Mike dared not yet look back at the four days past. He desired to efface every trace of his stay at the old mansion in Fireplace. To this end, Red Mike deftly substituted the stolen check and check strap for the one affixed by friend Wilkins at Sag Harbor, when the grumbling trainmen made up the Long Island City train at Babylon. "I'll send the keys of the old house back to-morrow. I'll get quickly rid of this, too," he shuddered as he gazed at his trunk of "books," "and when I get Bennett's check certified, I'm off to ould Ireland."

Red Mike felt a sense of delicious enjoyment steal over him as the train rolled into Long Island City near midnight. The gleaming splendors of his palatial gin palace wooed him in vain, until he had called the nearest truckman and followed his baggage to his own fortress of Bacchus. The drowsy freight handlers never even looked at the brass check which Doolan presented, but pushed out the trunk with their customary volleys of profanity at its weight. Red Mike soon slept the sleep of the just, as he had carefully

locked up his ill-gotten money, and received all the reports of his nimble Ganymede, Casey. "Just lock up that trunk, Patsey, in the baggage room for the night and then bring me the key," was the chief's last order.

Mr. Doolan was privately busied with his friend, James Devlin, for an hour in the baggage room of his alleged hostelry on the morrow of his arrival. "Do you want to take these off?" said Devlin, pointing to a strap and brass railroad check still hanging from the handle of the trunk which Mr. Seaton Bennett had carried all over Europe. "They forgot to take the check and strap off this."

"Never mind," growled Doolan. "Hurry up!" And while his confederate bent to his work, Red Mike compared the brass tag with the one in his hand. "That's all right," he grinned, as he slowly read off the figures, 1, 7, 5, 8 and 0—17580. "I'll be back in a minute." Mr. Doolan was very soon again resplendent in his chapeau de soie, his usual gala attire and his diamond of state. Grasping his gold-headed cane, he then walked down to the express office and most carefully made up a package, addressed "Seaton Bennett, Southern Hotel, St. Louis." He did not forget to telegraph to the same address these two cheering words, "All right," for there was a yellow missive already in his pocketbook bearing the news which now gladdened his heart. "Mailed letter to bank to-day." When the great Doolan returned, with measured steps, he found that James Devlin had neatly sewed up the trunk of books in a stout, doubled canvas covering. "That's grand," was the verdict of Red Mike.

"There's three thicknesses of canvas," murmured Devlin.

"All right now," nodded Red Mike, as he whispered, "Come around next week for your money." Mr. Doolan locked the door when Devlin departed, and then, seizing a brush and marking pot, painfully scrawled in huge black letters the inscription, "A. A., Brooklyn," and he grinned as he touched up the small letters, "Books—with care." "That'll do," was his admiring

comment. He soon sought the outer splendors of the gin palace and watched, in an hour, Mr. Patsey Casey, head barkeeper, singularly modest in his attire, drive away toward the Thirty-Fourth Street ferry. "Remember, Casey," said Red Mike, "tell the men to pay the storage for a year in advance, and have the trunk put carefully away. The man will not be back for a year from Europe, and maybe not, then. Here's his post-office address in Brooklyn."

There was some restless devil that day lingering in Mike Doolan's heart as he wandered around watching the harvest of future sorrow, poverty and crime being swept over his mahogany counters, until the face of Casey beamed upon him on his return.

"There's yer papers," growled Casey. "Paid storage bill, receipt and all, six dollars, and the expenses, eleven dollars in all."

"Good for you," heartily answered Doolan. "Send round now for my horses. I want to take a drive." And in the long hours of the summer evening Red Mike drove far afield, with his trusted attorney, Mr. Terence P. Grady, of the bar of Long Island City. They had soon settled all the preliminaries of Doolan's visit abroad. "I want to get over and back," said the man of bottles, "before the fall elections."

"There's nothing to hinder," was the advocate's answer.

Red Mike's usual jaunty tranquility had returned long before he thankfully entered the bank and there deposited the check for ten thousand dollars, promptly certified on Bennett's letter. "It's a good job that he's away to the Rockies," mused Doolan, as he telegraphed to Helena, Montana, "Sail Tuesday." "It seems that all the coast is clear," murmured Doolan, as his mind wandered back to the lonely stone house by the lagoon. "There seems to be no one left to mourn for her. God rest her soul. She was a rare beauty! I'll hold this devil up for all I can get out of him, and then Devlin can see that she's laid away later in consecrated ground. If he plays me false, by God, I have him

planted. For he's got the trunk check and he'll make a devil of a racket about his papers. I can find them just when I wish to," he laughed, "and that's another hold on him."

Fair Julie Martyn, in her cool, shaded villa at Saratoga, was gloating over her future happiness before several "associations" escorted the departing Doolan with music and vast hilarity to the Liverpool steamer. Three rousing cheers for "Doolan" sent the "Aurania" spinning away loaded with well wishes. It was the height of the brilliant summer, and Mrs. Martyn, blazing in jewels, sat in a dream of happiness upon her shaded villa portico and softly plotted all the details of the coming nomination of Seaton Bennett, Esq., whose election to congress was "a foregone conclusion." There were the most roseate reports coming daily of the success of the "Cyanide process," and the "Raven," filled with a jolly delegation of the Tiger's cubs, was far away now flitting along the Atlantic coast, pausing wherever bright eyes and foaming wine wooed these "statesmen out of a job."

But in this time of roses there was an unwonted excitement in the office of "Bashford, Blake and Bodley!" Counselor Bodley was busied with the various men who slipped in and out of the half-deserted law emporium with grave faces, blue bearded with close shaving. Messengers and telegraph boys flitted about uneasily, and the startled Mr. Nathaniel Withers delivered much off-hand wisdom to the detained employes. For the most imperative cablegrams from Hiram Bashford in Europe as to the whereabouts of Miss Madeleine Ware had been all answered with the ominous words "Missing still!" The circle of timid ladies at Mamaroneck exhibited to the detectives and the anxious Bodley all the packed-up luggage and accumulated letters of the woman whose silence and long absence now greatly alarmed them all!

The very closest search of New York and vicinity had elicited nothing. Mrs. Flossie Renwick's anxious demands were also added to those of Counselor Bash-

ford, and even the old home in Delaware had been visited by Lawyer Jarvis, now thoroughly frightened himself. The most carefully worded personal advertisements in the journals remained without reply, and the fact of the recreant Shearer having compromised his suit was an added cause of alarm. It was passing strange. For a hundred thousand dollars awaited the return of the lost heiress of Ware Hall! "Thank God!" cried Bodley, as he opened a cablegram, after two weeks' of unsuccessful search. "Bashford is coming home at once, and he will take this load off my shoulders!"

There was the growing mystery, a sickening fear, now chilling all hearts! For sweet Madeleine Ware had simply vanished as if the earth had swallowed her up! There was not a single trace of her path after her departure from Mamaroneck on that sunny day when she stole away with love in her heart to meet the man whom she had dowered with her young life! Counselor Bodley was sore at heart when Bashford's cablegram was followed by the appearance of Mrs. Florence Renwick, escorted by her anxious husband. Jimmy Renwick listened in a sad silence to his wife, who, through her broken sobs, vainly demanded the friend of her childhood at the hands of the agitated Bodley!

"This Mr. Bennett! Your young partner! What does he say?" persisted Florence, for the memories of Seaton Bennett's longing glances returned to her. "My dear Madame!" was Bodley's hasty rejoinder. "Impossible that he should know! Our Mr. Bennett left here two weeks before Miss Ware disappeared, and he has been working at the Golden Eagle Mine in Montana with a hundred men around him, all the while! He has also been in frequent correspondence with us. Here is his answer: 'Know nothing whatever,' to our first dispatch. He will be here himself in three weeks to explain further!"

It was absolutely unanswerable, for all men now

knew that the great "Cyanide process" of Professor Eckfeldt was a patent success!

And at Saratoga, Julie Martyn, waiting there to clasp her returning lover to her breast, counted now the days until the election certificate should be her bridal present to her chosen husband! For by his side—she stood in fancy now, to see the doors of the White House open to the first visit of the laureled young statesman! The crown of her loveless life!

The breezes sweeping over the lonely rose arbors of the old home on the Delaware swept away in eddying whirls the drifted petals of the flowers which the dead girl once loved! The gray mists silently wrapped the lonely shores of Montauk Point, but never again did the gentle eyes of Madeleine Ware look upon the face of these friends who sorrowed in heart bitterness! She was now only a vanished vision of delight! It was in silence and bowed down with sorrow's heaviest burdens that Hiram Bashford at last stepped upon the pier at Hoboken, when the good ship which brought him heavy-hearted home was made fast! He could scarcely command his senses when Florence Renwick threw herself in his arms. "Did you find her in Europe?" was the little matron's agonized cry. "Madeleine! No! Nothing—not a trace of her!" was the startled man's reply. "Then," sobbed Florence, "she is dead, or else gone mad, or has been carried away! For, I have received a letter from Europe in her own hand! Oh! My God! Poor Madeleine!" While Renwick comforted his wife, a horrible fear thrilled a moment in Bashford's heart! "Never!" he muttered, and his face was ashen as he led them aside. "Tell me all!" he groaned.

BOOK III.—Vengeance is Mine, Saith the Lord.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONGRESSMAN'S MARRIAGE.

On the evening of Hiram Bashford's return to New York city the mansion of the old lawyer blazed with unaccustomed light. Above stairs, Mrs. Renwick was busied in conference with the business representative of the absent Mrs. Minnie Walton, while in the library below the gray-haired lawyer sat at a table with Mr. James Renwick as chief aide-de-camp. Opposite them the stern inspector of police, whose very name was a terror to criminals, conversed in low tones with the chief of the New York city detectives. "I now place the whole matter in your hands, Inspector," said Bashford, "with the one proviso, that you'll call on me for all the money you need, and all the help that I can render. I shall do nothing in the routine line of my profession until I have determined the whereabouts of this missing girl—dead or alive! What is your idea of the case?" The two police chiefs had been communing for two hours now, and then pausing to ask a question of Renwick or Bashford. Several times the young husband had gone up stairs to bring information from the schoolmate, who already mourned her friend's demise.

"There's no use to talk!" cried Florence. "My reasons are simply a woman's reasons! Madeleine herself never would have written that letter to me to be received in that mysterious manner! It is not her way! And, there has surely been some dreadful wrong!" The

inspector gazed pityingly at Bashford as he consulted his repeater. "I can answer when we get the cablegram from this Mrs. Minnie Walton in Paris! Then, I am ready to make up my mind! I do not wish to send out a general police alarm until we are all agreed in our plan of action!" They were soon interrupted by Mrs. Walton's agent, who had been summoned to the front door. "Just as I told you, gentlemen! Just as the ladies at Mamaroneck said!" was the agent's remark as he read: "Hotel Continental, Paris. Know nothing; no letters received; have not heard of the person being on this side." The signature, "Mrs. M. Walton," seemed now to close the last door of hope for Jimmy Renwick! "Sit down, Mr. Barton!" said the inspector. "What is the report of these ladies out there? Give me every word of their remarks! I wish them all to kindly come in here to-morrow, and I would like them to allow my personal representative to have the fullest access to every nook and corner of that house! Also, to allow Miss Ware's baggage to be examined. I'll send a locksmith and a specially experienced man in such cases!" Bashford dropped his head on his hands as the agent recounted the barren story of the three fellow sojourners at Mamaroneck. After ten minutes, it was clear to all that Madeleine Ware had openly departed, after due notice to Bodley and her country house friends, on a brief visit to some unnamed country locality. Her directions as to her retained baggage, her letters and her personal affairs, was the same to all—to simply await her return or her later orders! "So," mused the inspector, "it seems that she avoided telling any one of her real purpose in this departure, and even concealed it from Mrs. Renwick!" The veteran official took up Madeleine's last letter to Florence Renwick, declining her hospitalities. "She went away, then, to meet some one!" Jimmy Renwick grasped Bashford's arm as he started up, crying, "Impossible!" "Pardon, counselor!" gravely said the inspector. "When you have followed the hidden side of New York life, as I have, for forty years,

the word 'impossible' will be dropped from your vocabulary!" "Go ahead!" groaned Bashford.

"Now," said the inspector, "who are the men of social rank who have been around there these two seasons?" The agent ran over the names of a dozen of Minnie Walton's journalistic and literary set. "Also," he said slowly, fixing his eyes on Bashford, "Mr. Seaton Bennett came out to see Miss Ware about the time of the Shearer suit down in Delaware!" The brief recital over, Barton uneasily said: "I have done all I can. I'll bring these people down to-morrow. I'll write Mrs. Walton. Is there anything else I can do?" "Yes!" said the inspector. "I'll send a man up there to act as gardener for a month. Tell the ladies to let him have full swing! I'll give them all their points to-morrow!" When Barton withdrew, the inspector referred to a list of dates and penciled brief of notes before him.

"The others are all well-known men of good repute. Each one has to show up daily in New York on duty, and there seems to be no hidden motive! As to Bennett!" he paused, and closely studied Bashford's face. "There's Bennett's dispatch!" frankly said Bashford, throwing down a paper. "He has been at the Golden Eagle Mine in Montana for weeks! He left New York two weeks before Miss Ware disappeared. His interest in our firm is a snug fifteen thousand dollars a year to him. And, beyond aiding her in trying the Shearer case in my absence, he has sought no intimacy with Miss Ware. While admiring her talent, he always deplored her being entirely out of place in the public exposure of a busy law office!" The inspector read over the lines with care.

"Coming home at once. Distressed at news. Know absolutely nothing. Will aid in every way. Arrive in three days."

"These are certainly the frank words of an honest man!" said the inspector. "Did you see the evening paper?" "What is there in it?" demanded the two searchers in a breath. "There's a long account of this

wonderful new 'Cyanide gold process,' and a statement that Professor Eckfeldt and Seaton Bennett of New York have carried the working tests on to a magnificent success. Mr. Bennett represents alone, the owners of the Golden Eagle mine, and also the syndicate which has bought the new process for a half million dollars. It states that Bennett has watched this process in secret for months! Such a man is above any foolish escapades with his share of a clean million in sight!" There was a silence around the board till Jimmy Renwick hesitatingly said: "My wife still fancies that Bennett did have some influence over Miss Ware! She insists on it!" "He will be here very soon to answer for himself," replied the inspector. "I can tell you a secret: Bennett will probably be slated for Congress from the Nineteenth District this fall! I know all our younger New York men pretty well in their downsettings and their uprisings!" firmly said the officer. "There's not a single black mark against Bennett. His life is clean—and clear! He is ambitious, able and an available man! The friends behind him who are giving him a 'walk over' for Congress are probably in this 'Cyanide process' syndicate, and he would be a mad fool to throw away his chances and his career! I suppose you all know that what is called the 'woman business,' will drag down any man whose name goes before voters or conventions! People collectively apply rules of morality which they often forget in their own private lives."

"Yes!" gloomily answered Bashford. "Many a favorite son of the people has sadly stepped down and out, dragged down by the unavenged wrongs of womanhood! Now, it is only due to Bennett to say, that I myself urged him to push the Shearer case for me, in my absence. Miss Ware was to me simply an adopted daughter!" He sighed heavily. "And, moreover, Blake and Bodley never liked her presence in the office. They may have felt that it would embarrass them when—when I drew out forever! Now, Bennett always handled the office work specially assigned to

Miss Ware, and as I gave her my private affairs while absent, and Bennett was in sole charge of the firm's office business in vacation, they were mutually thrown somewhat together! No! There's nothing wrong there! And Blake and Bodley also say there's not a shadow on Seaton Bennett! His letters to them are full, frank and manly! He told me of all his congressional hopes—and of many other things. I intend to leave him a share of my practice when I retire, which will be very soon!" Hiram Bashford's head was resting on his hands. "I would have gladly set these young people up! Bennett had only to speak! I have willed Ware Hall to this dear missing girl—and—a lot of money! There was no obstacle!"

The inspector said quietly: "Tell me of this hundred thousand dollar compromise." "Why!" simply replied Bashford. "That money was duly paid in to Jarvis and Thorn by Shearer's father-in-law. It lies there unclaimed. The old Delaware blue bloods boycotted the whole connection, bank, Shearer and his bride's family. They sullenly paid up for peace and to stay popular clamor at Shearer's cowardice!"

"Could Bennett have known of this?" persisted the cautious inspector. "He was already a month in far-off Montana before the unexpected surrender of these Delaware scoundrels," quickly said Bashford.

"And there has never been the slightest reply to Bodley's advertisements? To Mrs. Renwick's veiled 'personals?" the officer demanded, as he lit a fresh cigar. "Not even an anonymous postal card? Not a single rumor?"

"Not a thing!" It was the joint reply of the two men watching the inspector's sphinx-like face. The two police officers murmured a few words, and Bashford's brow crimsoned as he heard the detective captain whisper: "I'm afraid it's just the old story!"

"I shall send out a general alarm now!" said the inspector, with a repressive glance at the detective. "Oblige me by letting me have even the slightest facts which may recur to you! Now, I wish to read over

that letter of hers which you have held back! The one from Europe! For," the inspector steadily and deliberately continued, with half-closed eyes, "that missing young lady left voluntarily for one purpose only—to meet some man! It was love—not business—that took her away! She concealed her purpose from even her dearest friends! She went to meet some one who had grown dearer than all her intimate circle, more to her even than this money waiting her—than the future career which so brightly flattered. In other words—it was love that led her to turn away from the whole world, for one alone! And—worthy, or unworthy—it does not matter! She is gone! Another beautiful woman missing!"

"And, she is now with him in Europe?" cried Bashford with a sinking heart. "By no means!" coolly replied the inspector. "She may be hidden in New York, almost within hail. I don't think that she is in Europe!" "Why?" breathlessly cried Bashford and Renwick. "She was free to move in every way. No one had the faintest claim on her! I do not even think she sent that letter herself from Europe! You say that she wrote it! Well and good! It was sent over there and posted to screen the man who needed to be screened. It is a decoy! She had nothing to hide, but voluntarily left you all mystified!" "And, then, where is she now?" demanded Hiram in an ecstasy of agony. "Ah! God alone knows!" gravely said the inspector. "There are over two hundred missing women every year reported in New York! Some we find!" His voice was solemn. "Some are never found!" "You think that she has been—" The inspector laid his hand kindly on Bashford's arm. "I think nothing! Give me the letter and its envelope. The man she would screen may have been a married man—he may in some other way be fenced in with the world's trammels. He may have already tired of her—she may now be in durance or hidden away! False shame may perhaps seal her lips! They may be silent forever! The story of woman's trust, of man's brutal-

ity, of the quickly ripened harvest of error—it simply sickens my heart! I always see the frantic parents, the deceived husbands, the betrayed lovers, the distracted friends! And—these things—these sad things—occur even in the best of families! The greater the height, the deeper the plunge! The hard way of sin!”

Bashford silently laid the letter down before the stony-faced inspector, whose glasses were now turned upon the document in silence for five minutes. He finally said, gravely: “I must keep this!” Renwick and Bashford sat as if under the death sentence while the inspector turned to the detective captain. “This Liverpool date is over three weeks after her disappearance. The envelope is stamped with the trade mark ‘American Specialty Company. Fifth Avenue Hotel.’ The letter and its cover are wrinkled in those minute folds made by being carried long in a man’s pocket! Some man took that letter to Europe to post from there! Not the man she met!” “Why so?” faltered Bashford. “The man she met, as a lover, wanted her—not her friends!” was the officer’s answer. “It looks bad! He would not help her to communicate! No woman carries a letter for any time in a pocket! It is one of the fads of the sex to be pocketless! This letter has been crumpled and worn with all the movements of a man’s body! Now, the whole thing shows that she is not in Europe—we know that she left of her own accord, deceiving you all! That some man under the control of her lover posted that letter, by his orders, to deceive you all and to throw you off the track! He feared only the search for this woman! He did not fear her leaving him, for then he never would have sent it. If she were free, she would have sent it herself to the one friend of her childhood. Mark you, she wanted but one person to know of her happiness—not you. Now, why should you not joy in her happy love, if open and honorable?” Bashford dropped his eyes! He dared not openly avouch his perfunctory offer of hand and home to the spirited girl! The inspector continued: “Again, no place, no date! She was cer-

tainly a free agent when she wrote this letter! She did not wish you to follow her there! It may have been used—used, too, in a way that she did not foresee!” The inspector’s voice was shaken as he read aloud the last words of Madeleine Bennett:

“Dearest Florence:

“You are the only one in the world to whom I can now say that I am happy—so happy—supremely happy! You will not wonder at my absence, or at my past silence, when you know all! You will not blame me for not coming to you first, for my new life opens to me all that I ever wished for. You will be the first to whom I shall tell all. Do not seek me until I come to you. Send me a single kind word to Mamaroneck, and—wait in love for me! This is for your own eyes alone!

“Always, as of old, lovingly,

“Your Madeleine.”

“The woman who wrote these words had given herself up blindly to another’s will!” concluded the officer. “She thought herself to be beloved! There has been a change! She had nothing to conceal, and she may be hiding away, or hidden! Demented—or—dead! I shall only search for her now as ‘missing’—and, I fear that it will prove to be a criminal case!” The two officers had gone before Bashford and Renwick found words. “I will take my wife home,” sadly said Jimmy Renwick. “Hugh and I will come over here to you any time at your call! Florence must be taken away out of this. As for you, my friend, there is but one hope! The inspector! Leave it all to him. Bennett may be able to throw some light on her associations. He is keen-brained and active! He will help. Is there no theory among the ladies at the apartment house?” “Bodley has worked up every clue,” replied the old lawyer, wearily. “She had no real intimates! Even Mrs. Van Cortlandt cannot give a single useful hint! Withers, the head clerk, has

scoured the lower part of the city! The postal authorities, the janitor and his family, the tradesmen, are barren of news. There is not a single clue to work upon!" "Do you think that she could have gone over to Europe?" timidly hazarded Renwick. "Her life was so lonely—so loveless! Remember that she was young and spirited! She never knew a mother! And—if gone astray—her pride—poor womanhood's last shield—might keep her deaf to the appeals of even our loving hearts!" "Ah! Renwick!" cried Bashford, rising, "I would stake my life upon her honor, dead or alive! No! There is but one answer to all! She has been betrayed! And I will give my life up to tracing this out!"

Long after the young Pennsylvanian had led his sorrowing wife away, Hiram Bashford walked the floor that night with restless tread. "If any man has harmed my poor darling," he growled—for hideous visions came to mock him—"then, it were better for that man he had never been born!" In the far hills of Montana, Seaton Bennett that night read over a dozen times a brief reply to his own telegraphed words. His eyes glittered with a strange triumph as he read: "Hasten back here. We need your help. Come at once. Bashford."

"I have fooled them all!" he mused, as the comfort of the brandy bottle warmed his flagging courage to the "sticking point!" "Doolan has done his work well! He will be away a month yet! I will get my trunk safely back long before he returns! The yacht, too, has been far away all the while! And Bodley writes me that the advertisements have not brought out even a rumor! I wonder if—" He dared not finish the thought! For, safe as he was, he would start at night in his dreams and murmur: "Deeper! Dig down deeper!" He would fain know that a hiding place had been hollowed so deep that wind or wave, that man's prying hand would never uncover the dread burden Red Mike had borne alone out to the lonely sand dunes of Montauk Point on the night when he

fled away! Seaton Bennett had feverishly thrust himself into the active labors of the long working experiment. He consorted only with the overjoyed scientist, who ardently longed to return to the Rhineland, and he avoided the lonely reaches of hill and canyon around. For, even the darkness affrighted him now! And on the night winds whistling down from the Rockies, towering there far above him, their awful unscaled citadels already white with snow, that wild wail, "Help, Seaton! Help!" seemed to sound, in a woman's last appealing cry of loving tenderness! "Let us get out of this, Eckfeldt!" demanded Bennett, when, in answer to the last of a score of cautiously worded letters, Julie Martyn had gladly used the harnessed lightning to bid her lover come to claim his reward! Bennett knew now that the secret junta had formally named him in their last conclave for the fortunate congressional "walk over!" And so they sped away homeward, these two returning agents of a hidden syndicate, preceded by Bennett's telegraphed words: "The Cyanide process is an assured success!"

Before Professor Eckfeldt had joyously been re-baptized into the colony of flaxen-haired exiles in Little Germany, on Third Avenue, in New York city, and long before Seaton Bennett had drawn the fair widow to his triumphant breast in their hidden rendezvous at Schenectady, the two high police officials gazed blankly in each other's faces when the inspector frankly said: "Captain! It looks as if we might as well throw up our hands! This is a blind trail! This Madeleine Ware affair! I fear that she has been put away!" "Is Bennett back?" demanded the detective. "No! He comes to-morrow!" sullenly said the chief. "But, what of him?" was the final verdict. "He is not a mad fool! He is a made man for life, and he is out of all this!" "Then," said the disheartened detective, "If it's no case of a 'double life,' I fear it is a case of a 'single death!' I fail to see any motive!" "Don't you know, captain," was the chief's sharp answer, "we always build up our inferential motives and the history of these

cases backwards! I fear that the dark river depths, the potter's field, the deep security of a nameless grave, hides that beautiful girl!" And the chief of four thousand sighed, as he mournfully laid away a picture of the stately orphan's noble, wistful face. "Only one more! My God! It's a pretty hard world we live in now! This fin de siècle New York! Did she throw herself away? Or, was she trapped? Ah! There are as many life histories hidden as there are women! I have always maintained, Shackelford," said the chief, "that a man never knows anything at all about a woman! Now, this poor girl surely had her hidden heart history, the past story—all her own! And, who knows her fate? There was a burly, bediamonded man at that very moment lording it in the "spirit room" of the Royal Victoria at Queenstown, who was taking his last leave of the Cove of Cork before returning to that "state of life to which it had pleased God to call him!" The gentleman yearning to resume his status of "an influential loafer," and cheerfully listening to "the Bells of Shandon," was Mr. Michael Doolan, who, over a steaming punch of "Dunville's V. R.," was slowly deciphering a scrawl from James Devlin, "of that ilk," the second political factotum of Long Island City. "So, the coast is clear!" mused Red Mike, as he went out on the quay and bought several fagots of "blackthorns" for "the boys."

"I fancy that I now have my friend Mr. Seaton Bennett in a close grip! And, he must shell out many a cool thousand before he gets that trunk of his back again!" Doolan, coarse-minded and cunning, had revolved every possible future complication in his mind! "I'll bleed the boy a bit!" he mused. "If he squeals, then I'll have him know that there's two of us in it! And—Jimmy Devlin will always be square with me! There's the Clan-Na-Gael pull, always! For 'my honey boy, Bennett,' might just think it to his interest to put me out of the way—like that poor charmin' girl—after he gets the 'M. C.' and 'the widow!' Yes! My boy! I'll hold you down tight!" Whereat the pilgrim of Erin returned to his pipe and bowl to await the Au-

rania. "I'm away long enough!" he decided. "The convention is near, and election coming right on! Money will be flying around, 'Money to burn!'"

There is a huge yellow fortress on Seventh Avenue in New York city, towering high in air above the gray stone foundations sweeping a whole block from Fifty-Second to Fifty-Third streets! Its eleven stories are capped with two square campaniles, with galleries under their pyramidal roofs, whence the modern Babylon can be discerned crawling far beyond the Harlem River. The yellow firebrick walls, trimmed with red, gleam out, sharply punctuated with gloomy black iron shutters. Far above the copper tiled roof a lofty flag-staff bears the huge pennant lettered "Manhattan Storage Warehouse." Silent, gloomy and imposing, with its heavily iron barred lower windows and guarded entrances, it always prisons wealth and valuables reaching far into the millions. Its vast crypts hide secrets guarded by an army of sphinx-like servitors of lynx-eyed keenness. The huge stone mastiff heads at its main entrances speak of the tireless fidelity of the armed guard of keepers, retainers and firemen of the great corporation, "The Manhattan Storage and Warehouse Company."

From its lofty roof a second stronghold of the company on Lexington Avenue, can be seen, where another mass of the flotsam and jetsam of New York's restless dwellers is stored away in nervous times of flitting. The huge vans, loaded with precious heaped-up spoil, are bodily whisked up far into the airy heights of its great vaulted corridors and store vaults by huge elevators. A vast hall, below, filled with all the art treasures of a luxurious generation has its marble tiled area, with the great steel safe deposit vaults grinning there behind their massive gratings. Cages in masonry casements are piled high with costly gear to the very springing lines of the vaults, and millions in gold—the "long green"—the crisp bonds—in jewels and in securities—lie hidden from sight behind the steel double-locked doors of the individual compartments.

Fifty van loads daily make up the reflex tide of loables, while many hundreds of men and women daily escorted "behind the bars" add to or take from the secret store of prudence, the wages of sin, the thief's plunder, the gambler's winnings, the schemer's hoards or the politician's secreted bribes! Thither come in wealth the unfaithful wife to hide the jewels dearly bought in her self-surrender, the erring husband to lock up his anonymous precious letters, the blackmailer to hide his tell-tale papers, and so, millionaire and scoundrel, statesman and publican, trust blindly alike to the keeping of the "company" all the muck raked up in the fierce race for wealth and place! Bright, hard-faced girls of the swim, the painted queens of the Tenderloin, peculating clerk and crafty miser, come here with the motto, "Safe bind—safe find!" In the rush and hurry of the daily detail business, deft attendants silently speed the parting and welcome the coming! It was without raising his head that the handsome representative in charge" pushed over a receipt to Mr. Matsey Casey on the day when Red Mike had returned from his little pleasure trip to Montauk Point. "Consents?" "Books." "All right! One year's storage! Six dollars! Thank you! Stay! Please give the postoffice address!" And when A. A., Brooklyn P. O. box 1758, had been duly credited with "a box of books" the young manager carelessly said to a waiting subordinate: "Case of books. Stored for a year. Not wanted. Owner gone to Europe. Put it anywhere, sell out of the way!"

Long before Red Mike had pocketed the receipt for Mr. A. A., Brooklyn," on Casey's return, the great trunk, canvas covered so carefully by deft James Devlin, was covered up in a great gloomy hall by a score of the day's similar consignments. Before Mr. Seaton Bennett arrived to face anxious Hiram Bashford, there were a hundred tons of boxed heavy goods filling every corner of the great room. There in the darkness of night reposed the trunk which "Red Mike" had carefully decorated with the check and check strap, first put

on at Sag Harbor! The huge iron doors of the room were only opened to add to the growing pile of "long storage" goods, when an electric light ball, thrown in on a flexible wire, illumined the silent crypt in the huge fortress of Mammon.

"I fancy," mused Mr. Michael Doolan, as he walked the decks of the *Aurania*, surging along at sea, "Bennett will have a bit of a row with the Railroad Company when he presents the check for his trunk! Botheration! They'll just pay him a good round sum! That's all!" Red Mike laughed to himself in the smoking room. "He'll want the papers, too, maybe, some day! But I'll let him just shove out a few thousand for them! He will think that some fellow stole the trunk away out of the baggage room at the railroad depot!" And so, while Mr. Seaton Bennett flattered himself that the "Cyanide process" was a success, and the delighted Widow Martyn whispered all her plans for the winter to her lover at Schenectady, Red Mike gloated over the hiding away of the murderer's trunk. "The very devil himself would never look for it there, and whenever I want to I can have Jimmy Devlin hide it away forever! But, first, fifty thousand 'plunks,' and a good bit over!" was the rascal's greedy prophecy. "I have him forever in my power!"

"There is nothing to hold us apart now, Seaton!" whispered the infatuated Mrs. Julie Martyn, as her lover left her. "Come back to me! Come to Saratoga! For all is safe now." "Darling! I must go down to New York on a little business!" answered Bennett, drawing her to him. "Then, back to you! And the day after election, you are mine—darling—mine—forever!"

Seaton Bennett, Esquire, counselor at law, now managing director of the Golden Eagle mine, and proxy-holder for the principal owners of the "Eckfeldt Cyanide Gold Extracting Process," was covered with financial honors, present and prospective, as he ran the gauntlet of a number of reporters from Schenectady to Jersey City. In the intervals of love-making, he

was led to admire the business-like dash and mental audacity of the fair widow, Julie Martyn. It was true that a long study of men "behind the arras" of life had given the widow a wonderful self-command, gained since, as a girl of seventeen, when she first wondered at the secrets of the Tweed Ring! "We have incorporated under the New Jersey laws, for many cogent reasons," smiled Julie Martyn, as she gave her lover an endorsed certificate for a thousand of the ten thousand shares of the new company. "You can stop now at Jersey City, take out your certificates, in your own name, for different amounts of this little block of stock. Talk up the cyanide process everywhere! See all the journalists and Wall Street men! Your enthusiasm in this will blind those who are jealous of you politically, and they will fight each other at the convention! You come in as a dark horse, and a winning one! Leave all that to me! I will make the Nineteenth District nominating convention a petticoat assembly! Then—after election day—we have the world before us, bright and beautiful!"

Seaton Bennett took the precaution to telegraph in advance to Hiram Bashford of his arrival—and the great-hearted lawyer was cheered as he called his partners around him. "Just as I told you!" he vigorously cried. "I would like you both here at nine o'clock to-morrow. Hear this!" And Bashford read out:

"Will be at the office nine o'clock to-morrow. Use me in any way. Anxious about Miss Ware. Have heard nothing from you for two weeks. Out in mountains hunting and prospecting."

"There!" said Bashford, "that is the voice of an honest man! Bennett knows the uptown city better than any of us! He is a sportsman, too, and familiar with every inch of New York's environs. He may perhaps hit on some plan to push along our investigations. I will have the detective captain here! I am glad he is coming!"

Argument and demurrer, opponents and clients, waited neglected the next day while, with unruffled brow, Seaton Bennett listened to the views of the three

partners. The detective captain narrowly watched Bennett's manly bearing. Bashford had rained many congratulations on the younger man, and, taking him aside, whispered: "How about Congress?" "I've something better on hand—this new mining process!" warmly replied the younger man. "You have brought us national honors! That is enough for one year!"

"Ah! God, Seaton!" cried Bashford, laying his hand on the junior's shoulder, "I would give it all—laurels, money, the fame of my lonely life—just to know that poor girl is alive!" "Is there no clew?" faltered Bennett, agitated at heart. "Not the faintest. It is a blind trail!" The detective's purring voice ran on for an hour, in a series of cautiously framed questions. Bennett for years had watched the demeanor of erring manhood and silly womanhood on the witness stand. His grave solicitude, his quiet poise, never left him, and all the secret investigations of Bodley, Withers, Bashford and the police were confirmed by his straightforward, manly story. "I introduced Mrs. Walton especially to Miss Ware! Mrs. Walton is a gifted and warm-hearted woman. I knew that her acquaintance would be a safeguard to Miss Madeleine, for Mrs. Walton has the social 'personal equation' of every noticeable man and woman in New York down to a dot! I wish to God that she was back here now! A woman's eyes always see what is hidden to us men!"

Seaton Bennett had cleared himself easily!

There was nothing left to say in the conclave, for Bennett promptly volunteered all his services. "I wish only a little time to adjust this new company's affairs. But only a few hours daily! I will then give up my whole leisure to aiding Mr. Bashford! And more, I cannot do!" "Well, gentlemen," concluded Bashford, "we must now trust to the inspector and to you, captain!" The crestfallen detective took his leave, murmuring: "It is a dead wall around us everywhere! From the very moment this lady reached the Harlem River she is absolutely untraceable! I am of the inspector's opinion, that Miss Ware herself, wove this

cloud of mystery around her to defy the pursuit of friends—not enemies! In this strange self-devotion she has aided the plans of anyone who would work her wrong. It is herself who burned the bridges behind her! And—there is absolutely no motive!”

Hiram Bashford drew Seaton Bennett up to his desk when the others had gone, and he had locked the doors upon them. “There, my dear boy, is the motive!” said Bashford, suddenly producing Madeleine Ware’s last letter. “It only remains for us to find the man!” “I would not show this again before them all, for it seems to bring up my poor girl’s character.” Hiram Bashford’s eyes were clouded with tears, and he did not see the trembling of Bennett’s hands as he eagerly perused the fatal letter!

“It is incomprehensible!” murmured Bennett, when he handed the paper back, after a long study. “I will report to you to-night at your residence! I must go now and open my rooms and settle myself.”

Bashford was moved at Bennett’s anxious sympathy when the young man convulsively pressed his hand at parting. For the senior had said: “You are my last hope! I count on you to aid me in this! We must find her! For the inspector has frankly told me he is baffled! He can do no more!”

Seaton Bennett’s nerve had quickly returned. “I have fooled them all!” he mused, as he sat at his desk and smoothed out the snowy certificates of stock in the Eckfeldt Company. In an hour he had arranged all his personal mail, and he took good care to pass the various employes in a secret review. No one seemed to gaze distrustfully at him, even the critical woman typewriter murmured over the keys: “He looks all broken up over this mystery!” The newspapers had been foiled of their prey in the budding sensation, as the reporters all had the tip that the chase for Madeleine Ware’s enemies was to be a silent war path! Stopping a few minutes at his safety deposit company to lock up the “Cyanide process” stock, Seaton Bennett then fought his way up town past friends eager to “get in on the

ground floor," and the reporters stirred up by Mrs. Julie Martyn's unseen finger! The very first duty of Seaton Bennett, M. C. in future, in arriving at his own rooms was to give the jubilant janitor the brass trunk check which Red Mike had sent on to the Southern Hotel, St. Louis. "There's a five dollar bill, Morton!" genially cried Bennett. "Send an express wagon at once over to Long Island City. The trunk is in the baggage room there. It's full of valuable papers. Tell the man to hurry, and be careful with it!" Then, while the cerberus hastened away, Seaton Bennett sank into a comfortable chair! The prospect of his future life had never been as alluring as now! For he saw the dome of the Capitol loom up over him. He heard his own mellow voice re-echoing from the vaulted roof of the House of Representatives' splendid hall, and there, too, in the members' box, he could picture "Mrs. Seaton Bennett," the woman who was now so craftily grooming the dark horse of the Nineteenth District! "Yes! The 'Cyanide process' is a success!" he gloated, as he turned over an accumulated private mail. "As for this trouble, it will blow over! They are all a pack of damned fools. And, no one will ever know!" Mr. Bennett finished a cosy luncheon at his club and strolled back to his rooms in high good humor, for a perfumed billet, pulled out of a pyramid of mail, told him that Mrs. Julie Martyn would be at home at once. "I come incognito," she wrote, "for they are 'making hostile slates' for the nominating convention, and I must be there—to break them. Come up to-morrow evening. I am at home—but only to you!" "What a woman! What a woman!" joyously reflected Bennett, for the confidential intimacy of these last three months before the election would chase away all memories of the distant lonely stone house, shaken with storms and wrapped in mist wreaths, where the sea gulls screamed around far Montauk Point! The scoundrel never gave a thought to the white-robed figure which he had seen, a lovely wraith, at the half opened window, the outstretched arms, for the last ringing cry,

"Help! Seaton! Help!" sounded no longer on his ears!

There was a bothered look on the janitor's face as Bennett entered his own hallway. The smile quickly faded from the happy dreamer's face as the wagon-driver took up explanations in chorus: "Sorry to say, sir, that your trunk is missing, Mr. Bennett! The agent at Long Island City, thinks, however, that it may not have been transferred at Babylon. The 'Montauk local' stops there. Your trunk was waybilled all right, and it was checked through. No. 17580. They have telegraphed up to Babylon and Sag Harbor about it. What shall we do? You must wait!"

"Never mind the five dollars. Keep the change," said the startled lover. "I'll go over myself and see about it. The papers were very valuable!"

Bennett was the recipient of an ovation from Mr. Patrick Casey, who represented the absent Doolan, when he entered the gin palace of the still absent politician late on the evening of this annoying incident.

"Give me a good room up stairs, Casey," said the lawyer sharply. "And send up a bottle of wine and some good cigars. Come up yourself. I wish to see you. When is Doolan expected?"

"He's on the *Aurania*, to be here in four days" was the barkeeper's answer. "What's gone wrong?"

"I'll tell you upstairs," moodily said Bennett, stalking away, while the words "Congressman," "millionaire lawyer," followed him in the husky whispers of an admiring crowd.

In ten minutes, Casey knew all Seaton Bennett's trouble. "I am very busy. This trunk affair is important—vastly important," said the lawyer. "Those damned railroad fellows appear to have lost my trunk. They offer to pay if it's not found. My check is all right. They have put all their freight detectives at work and will advertise at once. Austin Corbin's old rattle-rap may land a piece of baggage anywhere. Now, his trunk's full of papers that money cannot replace. You must watch this daily for me till Doolan returns.

Here's my house card. Telegraph me there. I'll come over myself and open it and see it has not been robbed. You must telegraph me Doolan's arrival. I'll go down to the steamer and meet him."

"There'll be a dozen associations in line," proudly said Casey.

"Damn the associations! I want my lost trunk," was Bennett's rejoinder. "By the way, did Doolan perhaps bring it back over here and store it? I was in St. Louis, but he sent the check there."

"I'll examine and report in the morning," was Casey's dutiful response.

There was a little lingering cloud no bigger than a man's hand on Seaton Bennett's happiness when he clasped the ardent Julie Martyn in his arms the next evening. For, Casey had promptly reported that Doolan only brought one trunk, his fishing traps, back from the week's journey. "There it stands, unopened, now," said the innocent Casey, who knew not that Doolan had slyly shipped that dunnage of his own back by the Sag Harbor boat, with all a scoundrel blackmailer's cunning forethought. And the obsequious authorities of the railroad could not content Seaton Bennett with even the most liberal offers of *carte blanche* remuneration.

"You see, Julie," muttered Bennett to his coming bride, "your own letters and your dearest picture were in it." In a sudden spasm of fear he trembled at heart lest "Red Mike" might have carelessly packed up some of gentle Madeleine Ware's womanly gear therein. "He's only a drunken fool," glowered Bennett. In the glow of their dual castle building, Bennett forgot these gloomy forebodings, until he smartly questioned "the Honorable Michael Doolan," when the tug delivered him alive, but half drunk, from the Aurania's lofty side to the "J. J. McGinnis," the "A. O. H." and various other "associations," whose discordant bands brayed out "Hail to the Chief."

"Away to hell with yer trunk!" roared the reckless Doolan. "I sent ye the check on to St. Louis, as ye

would me. Sue the bloody company and make them find it."

"I must wait till this low rascal is sober," reluctantly decided Bennett, turning away disgusted. And then the desirability of some untoward accident happening to "Red Mike" first entered Seaton Bennett's excited brain. "It would be a good thing if his mouth were closed forever," mused Bennett, and he revolved the possibility of the "Cyanide process" working a second time. "Cyanide money may pay someone to sand-bag the life out of him some dark night, but only after I am elected," was the cowardly murderer's welcome to his whilom tool and secret agent. But a new "suaviter in modo" daily diffused itself over Bennett's hidden excitement. The nominating convention was named and the rising man listened to Julie Martyn's masterly sketches of the situation from day to day. All smiled upon the rising sun of this autumn Napoleon of dark-horse politics. He was safe. For Blake and Bodley were driving along the legal engine, toiling at the wheels, while Hiram Bashford held the throttle again. The haunting every-day cares of life came to busy all the seekers after lost Madeleine Ware.

Seaton Bennett adroitly glided into Hiram Bashford's every confidence, and but one unexpected ordeal unmanned him entirely. It was when he was suddenly called in to face Mrs. Florence Renwick, her husband and her burly brother, Hugh Atwater. Under three sets of prying eyes, Bennett went over for the last time his cleanly riveted tale of all the incidents of Madeleine Ware's uptown life. He felt reasonably safe, for Mrs. Walton had returned to add her verdict of "a mysterious disappearance" to the general voice.

Bennett had sworn on his honor to Minnie Walton that he was without a clue.

"I fancied once that you were secretly devoted to her, Seaton," the journalist said, "but I believe you. I know you to be utterly selfish, and I do not think you generous enough, even to your burning passions, to take any great risk. You play a safety game in life."

But Bashford's manner showed some slight estrangement after Florence Renwick had departed. Hugh Atwater was gravely courteous, but Florence Renwick's eyes had blazed with an ill-concealed hostility. "I shall always believe that he knows something. I distrust that sleek, ready man. He is too ready. If he did not lure Madeleine away, how do you know that he did not outrage her pride in some mean way and so, drive her away? He is in the line of promotion. She would simply disappear, and never accuse him, for what woman will beg the question on her own honor? A man can say or imply now in safety, what rivers of blood would not wash out twenty years ago."

Hiram Bashford was disturbed, yet not convinced, for, after all, Flossie had never been known to be mistaken in her intuitions.

So Bennett deemed it wise to strengthen all his fortifications. "I am willing to throw up my contract now and leave the firm," he briskly said, two weeks later, noticing Bashford's continued withdrawal into his own shell. "I have just cleared two hundred thousand dollars in this mining venture, and I am willing to take a rest of a couple of years."

To his great surprise, Bashford only coldly said: "I will leave all that to Blake and Bodley, Bennett. You must speak to them. I shall soon retire and leave my firm interest to the disposition of those two gentlemen."

Seaton Bennett's stiff bow of wounded dignity carried him out of Bashford's inmost counsels forever. So, with an eager heart, he now turned to the coming congressional convention of the Nineteenth District. The vast town was busied with breaks and scandals in the Four Hundred and many "tenderloin upheavals." It was generally conceded that the flitting of Miss Madeleine Ware could be easily explained in the words of the homely poet, "Gone with a handsomer man." For steadfast old Hiram Bashford was now left to nurse his sorrows alone. The lynx-eyed detectives of the country could find nothing to warrant the inspector in using any more of Hiram Bashford's money. "I'd like to

soften the blow," said the chief to Bodley, whom he had sent for. "I am afraid Miss Ware quietly selected someone to rule her life, and has simply given Bashford the slip. It's not what we like to see women do, but it's what they often do," sighed the baffled inspector.

Seaton Bennett was more than usually bland and courteous in his last office dealings and he carried the mask, until seated beside Julie Martyn in her cosy library one auspicious evening, a trusty member of the three fellow candidates dashed up to the door of the residence, the bringer of good tidings. There were silver-necked bottles in waiting as he joyously cried:

"Nominated on the thirty-ninth ballot."

"Tell me all," said the laughing Julie.

"The two others stood in a deadlock," gasped the excited friend. "Dolliver had the tip. He made a few remarks in the interest of harmony. Hagadorn then withdrew his man, and you were unanimously nominated after the half-way count showed that you had snowed the other man under. Let me now congratulate you both!"

"There's my hand on it," laughed Mrs. Martyn, as Seaton Bennett led her into the dining hall. And so, lightly they spoke of the men who had been "turned down" at a nod from the silent Caesar of Tammany Hall. Bennett's star was in the zenith of glory now. The election was a mere formality.

It was on the evening of a day two months later, while Hiram Bashford was a lonely passenger bound for New Castle, that he opened one of the sheaf of evening journals which he had purchased in the vain hope of news of Madeleine Ware, for now, alas, hopes and fears were the same. He started as he read the words, "The election of the Honorable Seaton Bennett, Nineteenth District, is a brilliant testimonial to that rising young lawyer. His assured majority is over eight thousand."

Hiram Bashford then saw the light slowly breaking at last. "I'm sorry for the profession. We have driven Bennett out of the firm by the worrying annoyance of

this affair of Madeleine, and he is a far sounder lawyer than either Blake or Bodley."

That night the mansion of Mrs. Julie Martyn was ablaze with lights. There was a stream of carriages arriving and departing. Under a floral bell of exquisite orchids Mrs. Seaton Bennett received the congratulations of fifty astonished friends. Their delight was not unmixed with a dull envy. And then, in the stillness of their luxurious home that night, the light-hearted woman, whose every wish on earth was now gratified, whispered, "Seaton, the very moment you have your certificate of election let us go down to Washington and take a look at the Capitol."

He drew her to him in a passionate embrace. "I have but one little affair to attend to," he laughingly said. "Then, as now, I am yours."

And the next day, Red Mike received Seaton Bennett's check for fifty thousand dollars.

The Long Island Railroad Company's attorneys were, however, ruefully examining the papers in a suit for twenty-five thousand dollars, the value of trunk No. 17580, checked through from Sag Harbor to Long Island City, July 18, 1892. "We may as well settle the case," said the junior lawyer. "Bennett has just been elected to Congress and Doolan himself checked the trunk through for his friend. Doolan is a great power on Long Island, and Seaton Bennett has all Tammany Hall behind him now."

"We'll make him prove its contents and value," growled the senior. "We can then stave him off for a couple of years on appeal, but I suppose that we'll have to pay for it finally, unless we can fix the jury."

"Fix a jury, with Red Mike on the other side." The younger man laughed skeptically, and then went out.

While the Honorable Seaton Bennett proudly escorted his enraptured wife over the nation's great Capitol he mused, "I am safe now. It was really good policy to pay Doolan myself, out of my mining money, for Julie will be as wax in my hands, any way. She must never dream of any hold of this low brute, 'Red

Mike,' on the Honorable Seaton Bennett. If he were only out of the way." Seaton Bennett longed "to make assurance doubly sure."

He knew not that the devil was busily fighting for his own. For Mr. Michael Doolan had paid his mortgage off at last, with the price of Madeleine Ware's un-avenged blood, and, with his heelers around him, was very fast drinking himself to the verge of insanity in a grand bacchanalian and political glorification of the "victory." Whereat Patsey Casey, looking to the future, and mindful of Mrs. Doolan's very substantial charms, winked as he took his own light cocktail. "It will be an elegant business for me to fall into. Mike is doing himself no good!"

And in all these long months the shadows of darkness, day and night, shrouded the silent vault in the Manhattan Company's vast warehouse, where the great trunk marked "A. A., Brooklyn," awaited the return of that "gentleman in Europe," who might want "his books."

CHAPTER XII.

HOUNDED DOWN. LOST! TRUNK NO. 17580.

The glow of pride in Seaton Bennett's remarkable political coup de main was chilled in the great Nassau Street law office by a feeling that the firm had now lost forever its most active member. For the aging Hiram Bashford now sat sulking in his great lonely rooms, only answering in curt monosyllables the querulous calls of Bodley or careless Blake's snappy requests for "explicit" instructions. The whole office force felt that all things were strangely going wrong.

There was now no quick, alert Seaton Bennett to untangle the daily confusion. Even the parchment-

headed clerk, Withers, groaned under an increasing load. "Ask Miss Ware," had been hitherto also an all-round means of obtaining ready help. It was known to them all through that the brilliant junior had "drawn out for good."

"What should he slave for?" proudly remarked Withers. "A gold mine, a millionairess wife, and a seat in Congress! He has vaulted over the head of this whole lot, and is on his way to the Senate. Ah, there is a man. Bashford and Bennett could put away a dozen pairs like Blake and Bodley in the lost room in their craniums. But the old man is done for! He has thrown up the sponge."

It was indeed true. A dull glaze seemed to crawl across Hiram Bashford's far-searching eyes, his moods became almost savage. He lived partly in a happy past, now fled forever, and the rest of his lonely hours were simply a dull devotion to a mechanical search of all the environs of New York for the still missing Madeleine Ware. Every chief of police within five hundred miles of New York City had been furnished with a copy of the last photograph, taken at Castle Atwater, of the modern Portia. A minute personal description penned by the distracted Florence Renwick was printed upon the back of these "counterfeit presentments" of the loved and lost.

Bodley and Blake were also in a secret mystery now. "I feel that Bashford has put his foot in it," rebelled Blake. "Here is Bennett, rich, powerful and a rising man, and he has really been elbowed out of the office by this hub-bub about Miss Ware. I am perfectly sure that she will yet turn up in some snug new relation of life, with some younger and more attractive man than Bashford. You see, Bodley," he continued, "Miss Ware well knew that her very confidential relations with our senior might frighten off any really eligible man. The world misconstrues so easily. Bashford has had no eyes for anything but that girl since she first crossed our threshold and, whatever be the solution of the mystery, it has almost broken up our firm. Bennett

never even looked once in Miss Ware's direction, for his political backing, the mine and this process of such wondrous value all came with the woman he married. He kept all this very quiet for fear that it might hurt his election. He never even breathed it to me."

"Ah, Blake, it's far easier to marry a fortune than to make one," sighed Bodley, whose cormorant fashionable wife kept him "on the jump." She had only brought as a dowry to him "her airs and graces." "I do hope Bennett will not drop you and me," continued the cautious Bodley. "I will have my wife call on Mrs. Bennett at once. If Bashford retired, I fancy we can yet draw Bennett back to us. You must follow him up in the clubs."

In this wise Hiram Bashford had managed to loosen nearly all the ties which bound him, giving way to a sullen discontent and brooding along in a vain repining for Madeleine Ware.

The "slush" journals were soon full of the remarkably active social and political movements of the ambitious wedded lovers on their return from Washington. A magic touch had infused a new life into the richly mounted home on Murray Hill. When the Honorable Seaton Bennett's carriage paused before the Nassau Street office a fortnight later, he came in as a client of the firm for the first time. Bodley and Blake took their cue at once from his stately cordiality. "I have a really important trust to place in your hands," he said, with some anxiety. "Mrs. Bennett and I are going for a two months' cruise in the West Indies on her yacht, the 'Raven.' Her widowhood naturally kept her from any extended voyage. As I do not take my seat till March 5, '93, I can thus easily avoid the swarms of office-seekers and those men who always annoy even a member-elect. Here is the affair." And the young statesman handed out a copy of a general circular issued by the Long Island Railroad Company under date November 1, 1892.

"This is a strange case. When I ran up to the Sound last summer on the 'Raven,'" he blushed slightly, "I

got off at Sag Harbor and then went down to the Long Island Sporting Club's place for a last secret political conference before going out West to the 'Golden Eagle.' I hastened on to Baltimore, as I wished to avoid the active spies of the other candidates, and I left behind my Tammany friends, who acted on my behalf with full power. I've a good responsible witness, Doolan, of Long Island City, who checked this trunk for me. The trunk is filled with the most valuable private papers, my wardrobe, and also some of the unfinished business of the firm. I've already told Withers to get these lost papers up, at my expense, for you." The two lawyers bowed politely. "Now, as to the railroad company. They have made every search. Wilkins, their baggage agent at Sag Harbor, was torn all to pieces in a coupling accident there the other day. He was the man who checked No. 17580 through, and so the company is at a loss as to whether it is strayed or stolen. It might have been thrown out of the open car door at Babylon by sneak thieves while the train was making up there. There is five hours' delay in the last train which leaves Amagansett on the Montauk division at 2:20 p. m., arriving at Babylon 4:50, leaving there at 10 p. m., and arriving at last at Long Island City depot at 11:25 mi night. Now, Corbin and Reynolds have combed the whole of Long Island for this lost trunk. I want the property—not the money sued for. It would damage me greatly," the Congressman gloomily said, "these papers fell into other hands."

"What shall be done?" cried the two ex-partners in a breath.

"Make them find it, and no compromise! I'll have that trunk or the twenty-five thousand dollars. It will be a lesson to them." The young favorite of fortune rose. "Here is the trunk check. You see it is all straight. 'Sag Harbor to Long Island City.' Lock it up in your safe deposit vaults. It is what the French would call 'a pièce de conviction.' I will have the Long Island City lawyer send you over the papers and you can be substituted. Keep him in as counsel, for he

controls Doolan, my only witness." Seaton Bennett paused with a curious smile and drew out a check-book. "Shall I give you now a retainer?" he demanded.

"Nonsense," heartily cried the others. "Come over to the Lawyers' Club and lunch with us," was the cautious Bodley's pressing demand. "We want you to join Blake and myself after you are tired of Congress. We could make a strong team."

And so, while Bashford played the discontented Ajax, the three younger men pledged each other over the ringing crystal brims "to the future firm." Nothing succeeds like success, here below!

Bennett was particularly well satisfied with himself as he descended at the Murray Hill residence where his darling wife awaited him with sparkling eyes. "Seaton! The captain reports the Raven all in sea trim. He awaits your orders!" she said, with a pretty blush. "Can we leave to-morrow evening?" "Unless some unforeseen event occurs, Julie!" smiled Bennett, taking up a sheaf of letters. "I will run these morning letters over and then see the skipper!" His face was clouded as he thrust one of the letters in his pocket and strode into the library. "Get ready for sea! I depend absolutely on you! Don't have a pin-head missing! We will come aboard at four o'clock to-morrow evening. Have the steam launch waiting at the Battery then!"

Bennett turned to the happy woman who had followed him. "Julie! Are all your own outfittings ready? Nothing to delay us? I will have a tug ready to tow us to Sandy Hook, and we must not dally after starting! I want to make a good offing in the night!" "Trust to me! I am right to the last ribbon!" was her laughing reply. "Then, go it is! At four!" said the statesman, dismissing the bronzed sailor. As Captain Hank Moulton walked briskly away he muttered: "It certainly could not have been the madame! The other lady was much taller, and just a bit spryer. I should say she was ten years younger! I wonder if the madame knows of that little fly-away dash last

summer from Greenport to Sag Harbor! He must have left that girl down at Cape May! Oh! He's a sly one—this sharp-eyed lawyer!" The skipper judiciously dropped the investigation, for many a stolen hour had been enjoyed upon the saucy "Raven" by beauties who were "officially" on land, when, in the flesh, playing mermaid in the days when the yacht was at the disposition of Mrs. Julie Martyn's dashing Tammany friends! "She has a romantic record, I should say!" was the captain's last remark, as he turned in and "spliced the main brace" at a near-by saloon. He was a veteran in the summer pleasuring of the "newer man and woman" of the Atlantic coast, and had seen some little festivities to which the frolics of Aspasia, the pranks of Cleopatra, the idle hours of Tiberius, and Lucrezia Borgia's Venetian nights with Bianca Capello, were merely "back numbers"—just out of date wickedness, fallen into "innocuous desuetude!" For a thousand special deviltries aid the mad race for pleasure in these modern "go as you please days!" Hank Moulton had a just appreciation of a "soft thing" and a permanent situation. He, too, followed the wholesome advice of the great Croker: "Give nothing away!"

Mrs. Julie Bennett was a sparkling realization of the uncrowned American queen as she was handed to her carriage by her handsome young husband. "Don't wait dinner, Julie! I have to run over to Long Island City about that beastly law suit. But it is the last parting before we see the Pearl of the Antilles and all that! I'll be home before nine!"

When the laughing face was borne away, Seaton Bennett stood a moment, entranced, for two slender fingers blew him back a pretty signalled kiss! "By God! She is worth it all!" he growled, as he turned and ascended to his private room. He did not forget to read over again the brief note from Patsey Casey of "Doolan's palatial resort," after he had given his man directions for the packing of his whole outfit.

Bennett carefully reloaded a substantial revolver and slipped it in the pocket of his overcoat.

"Get me a coupé at once!" he directed, and then, he cast a glance at the leaden skies, whence the crisp breezes were already whirling the finest particles of a feathery snow squall. "What can this fool mean?" he growled, as he rolled away to the Long Island ferry. Casey's scrawled letter was brief and very much to the point. It brought a sudden rage into Seaton Bennett's heart. "I'll grind this damned fool to powder if he bothers me now! By heavens! I'll make Casey let the beast drink himself to death! Some of his own 'knock-out drops' might help! And Casey will grab the widow and the gin mill."

But the letter—this letter from Casey! Its words were ominous:

"The old man is drinking himself blind. And—he's threatening you! And talking too much! If I were you, I'd come over and bring him to rights! This is for you alone! There's trouble coming!"

"Patsey Casey shall watch him, and be well paid, too!" was Seaton Bennett's comforting decision. He was delighted at the secret hold he had gained upon Bashford's partners. "Once out of the way, Doolan can't bother me till March, and the brute may be dead then!" was the last cheering hope which the congressman carried to Doolan's saloon.

Patsey Casey came swiftly out from behind the bar when he saw the young congressman. "For heaven's sake! Come with me!" the young man cried, as he led Bennett into a tenantless poker room. "Doolan is ugly, half ways dangerous! I'm afraid to have you see him alone!" "Oh! I am all right!" coldly said Bennett, tapping the handy revolver in his breast pocket. "Ah! That would never do! There's too many of the friends mixed up in this, for a quarrel! Think of your name down there at Washington! Had I not better go in with you? The old woman and me are the only ones as can manage the 'boss!'" "Just tell him that I am here!" was the cool remark of the vis-

itor. "I am pretty patient, and I've seen many a drunken man before! Besides, I'm going to Cuba for a couple of months on my yacht. I'll see our friendly lawyer over here, and he'll very soon stop Doolan's mouth!"

"Well, if the old man doesn't taper off, old Jimmy Devlin will 'stop his mouth' with a few shovelfuls of clay, for good! Do you give him a good talking to! Bluff him down a bit! But, he's very masterful!" was Casey's parting injunction. Seaton Bennett found Red Mike in no gentle mood! Seated at a table, with the implements of the bibulous art around him, he never rose, but only gruffly nodded when the lawyer entered. "Just my man!" was the frowsy publican's salutation. "I hear yer a goin' away. I want some money before you go! A good wad of it, too! D'ye hear? No 'nickel in the slot,' but a good roll!"

"Who are you talking to?" sharply said Bennett, locking the door. "I've already paid you all I owe you—and more, too! If you are decent and civil, I'm ready to stand in, but don't you try to bully me! It won't work!" "I want ye to lave a good bit of money in the bank here, that's all!" defiantly said Doolan, rising as Bennett sprang up, for the "round-er's" eyes were ugly. "Yer going on a weddin' trip with the woman I got ye!" "I paid you all that I agreed," snarled Bennett, backing away from the whisky fumes. "Ye've not paid me for this girl—this Madeleine!" There was a loud crash, and then the table and glasses went over in a general wreck, as Bennett clutched the throat of the frenzied loafer. There was murder gleaming in the lawyer's eye, but he could not yet loosen his hold to draw the weapon in his breast pocket. Casey's "prophetic instinct" led him to break in the door at once, and followed by a brace of the attendants, to part the men wildly struggling on the floor. "Here now! By God! This'll never do!" was the irate bar keeper's protest. "Men of your standing fighting like two 'snide pugs! What does it all mean, Doolan? I'll tell ye! We've had a week of

yer tantrums! The Missus 'll get a warrant for ye! And we'll run the place without ye! Now, I'll warrant ye have insulted Mr. Bennett!"

To the general astonishment, "Red Mike" dropped into a limp heap in a chair. "I was all wrong! There'll be no more! Leave us for two minutes, and I'm done! I'll apologize!" The whisky courage had left Red Mike! At a nod from Bennett the three men left the room. "I'm in the hall!" truculently said Casey. "And no more shindies!" When the door was closed "Red Mike" whispered in a last taunting sneer: "Ye thought ye'd 'do me up!' I'll tell ye now that I have all the points on ye, Mr. Bennett!"

The lawyer writhed in agony, as Red Mike's leer told of a new danger. "I got that girl's picture from the chief of police here! I'll land ye at a wink if ye abuse me. And there's two of us in this deal! The other man has the picture now in his safe—and he's the man that helped me pack yer missing trunk—and to put the girl away! And he knows where she is—and how she got there, too! And, I have yer rig, and all her traps, too! D'ye think me fool enough to have trusted myself alone with you? I brought him up at night from Sag Harbor and hid him in the sand hills near the house! So, I'm safe now in yer hands, Mr. Seaton Bennett, for he'll send ye 'to the chair,' if anything happens to me! He'd hound ye down to the gates of hell, for he's a Clan-Na-Gael man! D'ye catch on to me now?"

The walls seemed to swing around the statesman-to-be in a wild dance as the blood left his heart in a gasp. "You scoundrel!" he hissed, as his arms dropped helplessly at his side. "Did he—did he see the girl?" "Of course he did!" sullenly blurted out Doolan. "I couldn't manage the job alone! I could trust him then. I can trust him now! He knows where she is, too!" Bennett groaned and covered his eyes! "So, ye've got two to deal with, and ye can just consider us as two partners in yer gold mine! Ye thought to sneak away and give me nothing! Now,

shall I call all these men in and tell them what I know of ye? A word to yer ould friend Bashford—and he'd crucify ye! Ye cold-hearted devil! Now, do ye know what's what?"

"Mike! For God's sake! Tell me there was nothing left in the trunk! If they should find it! Is there nothing of hers in it?" Seaton Bennett was almost imploring in his sudden break down! "Yer a damned fool, as well as a coward!" said Doolan, as he smoothed down his disarranged garb. "Do you think my friend and me would risk our own necks? No! Not a splinter is there! If ye'd a been a man, ye'd a packed yer own damned trunk yerself! Now, these detectives are nosing all over Long Island! Mayhap the girl was followed! If I was you, I'd get out, and stay out! They'll catch ye yet!"

"It's too late to stop this suit! They have advertised a big reward! I must let it go on now!" murmured Bennett, gazing appealingly at the Irishman. "That's all your own business—not mine! They'll never find the trunk!" significantly said Doolan. "The papers, maybe, might turn up!" "What money do you want now?" was Bennett's next question. "I want ten thousand dollars—'till the next time!" fiercely said Doolan. "And I'll lave ye my partner as a legacy when I die! Ye're a cold-hearted wretch! Give me a check for the money—and get out! The woman's far too good for ye that ye have bamboozled with yer damned airs!"

Bennett's hand drew out his check book from the pocket where the revolver was hidden. "There is what you want!" he said, as his wolfish eyes searched Doolan's brutal face. "Tell me! Does the other man know where the trunk is? I would make terms with him! I'd give him half that the railroad pays me to get it safe out of its hiding!" "Ax me no questions, and I'll tell ye no lies!" said Doolan, slipping the check in his wallet. "If ye were not a fool, ye would see that if the trunk was traced to us, it would ruin us all! I'm clear of the whole thing! And ye have enough to do

to dodge ould Bashford, for the chief here tells me that all the money for this girl hunting is put up by the ould boy! He'd crucify ye, if he ever finds ye out! Watch him, and let me alone. The old boy may die, and then the thing'll blow over! Don't yer see yer one enemy?"

It was a bit of Doolan's strategy to now amiably convoy the Honorable Seaton Bennett below to where a score of men welcomed the congressman-elect. "I'll have to ask ye for places for some of my friends here!" proudly remarked Red Mike, "by and by—when ye're aisy in yer chair at Washington!" Mr. Bennett called up the whole house!

"Any man recommended by Mr. Doolan is my friend," he said with a becoming grace. And as he walked away to the ferry boat he gazed at the dark flowing tide of the East River, mirroring the peaceful evening stars! "I wish to God that this brute would fall overboard in a drunken fit some dark night! I'll speak to Casey!" Bennett had parted from "Red Mike" with no attempt at friendship or reconciliation. "I'll guard this end, never fear! You'll not ever know my partner. If any man ever tackles you, you can just bluff the life out of him. Do you think that I'd give you the name of my silent partner? It'd not be healthy for him, nor for me! I'm too ould a bird! Now ye can press on yer suit and bleed the company for that twenty-five thousand! If any man living turns up with those papers, I'll get them for ye, on the dead square—for half yer stealings from ould Corbin! Some of the boys may have gone through it—and a mighty good job for ye! They'll steal all the traps and plant the papers! So ye're safe now with yer kicksy-wicksy widow! But, mind ye, Mr. Bennett, when I work the business end, do ye come up with the dust!" Red Mike strolled away as the ferry boat pulled out, and with a sigh of relief dropped his hand from a pistol butt in his side coat pocket. "He's safe now! He'll never mutiny again!" growled the thug, as he lounged into the bar. And Seaton Ben-

nett, pallid-faced, murmured: "I must buy this brute's silence! It would not do to follow him up! For there are two of them hounding me down!"

In the remotest hamlets of Long Island, from Montauk and Greenport, to Oyster Bay and Wading River, from Long Beach to Hicksville, the keen-eyed villagers were all eagerly looking for the trunk whose checked number, "17580," was baited with the offer of a thousand dollars reward, "and no questions asked," for its recovery. The silver sails of the "Raven" were gleaming far away where the surges of Salvador and the white foam line of the Windward Islands flecked the blue before Seaton Bennett's nerves had resumed all their accustomed equilibrium! But, these were sunny and happy days for the Congressman's lovely wife, who had left all her cares behind in Gotham, now given over to the wintry blasts and the whirling, eddying snow! It was a time of perfect joy and peace for the whilom Julie Martyn! She counted the days until the assembling of that Congress which was to be for her the opening of a new and splendid social existence! A life lifted above all the shadows of the past and splendid in the sweeping party triumph and all the reflected glories of her talented husband! The "Raven" glided along smoothly under the loveliest winter skies on the globe! From Bermuda to luxurious Havana, and on to the tangled ocean network of jeweled Caribbean islands, the homes erstwhile of the vanished buccaneer! In the varied panorama of foam-wreathed reefs, and of palm fringed keys, of opal clouds and emerald seas, Seaton Bennett's cares were at last shaken lightly away as the wind strips the needles of the forest pines! The boundless ambition of his sparkling-eyed wife had infused him now with a new courage! He forgot all the threats of the brutal-faced Red Mike, he lost the "hidden partner" of that ruffian's crimes from memory! On the splendid yacht, in the dim watches of the night, the tapping bell told only of a vigilant crew and a loyal sailing master! There was

a new bloom glowing now on Julie Bennett's tinted cheeks and a glad and happy light in her eyes. Seated on the quarter deck, the lady wove the fairest dreams of the future; dreams so romantic, so fantastic, that the grisly memories of Montauk Point faded far away from her listening husband. "You are now a man of national standing, Seaton!" she proudly said. "Our long cruise will break off the habitual social visits of the merely municipal men we once knew! I have always avoided women! They only pry and chatter! But, without opening our New York home, we will go directly down to Washington! There, if you will trust to me, I will make a 'salon!' I will return to New York with a new and eligible circle of women on my visiting list. You will rise still higher! You have already made your mark, and at your side I will labor to aid you, as you press on to those greater honors!" Bennett kissed the eager wife who so fondly believed in him. "I must be all you wish, Julie! For your dear sake!"

And as they sped down into the Caribbean and threaded the Windward Isles, he felt the truth, that his fatal passion for Madeleine Ware was only the blindness of a mere desire, born of propinquity and her false daily position! "She brought it all down on her own head!" he murmured. "From the very moment that she entered the office she was in a false light. Bashford's protégée was too lovely for a mere clerkly life! And she was always open to insinuation or attack! She was a fool not to have married him! I was a fool to be led on in those lonely days by her overmastering influence! If she had held herself within the natural lines of womanhood, she would have been queening it over this old man's splendid fortune, backed with his unrivaled standing! The mere women drudges around offices, quickly learn self-protection! A superior woman goes either too far—or not far enough!" Bennett's springy steps echoed on the deck in the long vigils, in which he tried to stifle a sense of coming trouble, and to thrust down the spectre of that

white-faced woman at the window of the death chamber! "I will land at Cape May and go directly over to Washington," mused Bennett, when, after two months, the "Raven" turned her prow homeward. "Julie can select her own establishment! And I, will be busied in the preliminary acquaintance of national men! This will keep Doolan away from me! He will not dare to write! He is too cunning. He fears to make a row in Washington, and he may fortunately drink himself to death! Can I believe him as to the destruction of all the girl's baggage? He is far too sharp to put his own neck in danger!" The congressman was suddenly seized with a gnawing anxiety to go back and verify all the "covering up" of that hideous and cowardly deed worked upon the innocent and trusting girl wife! "There's no proof whatever of the marriage! I can defy the whole world!" And yet the murderer's weird longing to go back to the scenes of a past horror was on him, and a terrible fear possessed him. "Doolan has his spies and underlings all over Long Island! I could not explain my absence to Julie. If detected later, my visit would be held against me as a damning proof! No! I must take my chances! A little more money fed out to Doolan will carry him into the gulf of a drunkard's grave! If I could trust any one to 'fix him!' Ah! No! I had to trust him! Had I? Fool that I did not hide her myself in the sand hills, and then destroy all her belongings!" And then the whole awful tableau came back to him again. He knew that it was his own craven fear that had made him powerless to look at the sweet face lying there pale and cold in death! The woman from whose clasping arms he tore himself, only to give her over to the deadly "Cyanide process" that he had devised by some horrible devil's prompting! It all seemed so base, so cowardly, now, the slaughter of that innocent!

The bridegroom was thinned and nervous as they glided at last into the refuge of the Delaware breakwater. "I wish that I had never brought that cursed

suit for the trunk—and now, it is too late! I must play the whole game out!”

The congressman-elect hastened by train from Cape May to Washington in February snows, while the very happiest woman of the new coterie of fair ones to arrive was busied with her hegira to the capital. It was with a delighted pride that Mrs. Bennett noted the announcements that the “Honorable Seaton Bennett had taken winter quarters at the Arlington, where his beautiful and accomplished wife would entertain lavishly,” etc. This “movement in high life” caused a flutter of instant excitement in the bosom of “Red Mike,” who had deftly learned by haunting the Tiger’s lair on Fourteenth Street of the return of the “Raven,” which was now lying at her winter quarters.

On the very evening when Mrs. Bennett departed for Washington with her social reserve batteries and “siege outfit,” the lynx-eyed Doolan himself watched the closing of the New York home. “So, my lad! You give me the slip! And you think that I’ll be fool enough to venture down to Washington! I’ll show ye a trick worth two of that!”

“Red Mike” proceeded to a “field day” of active conference with his smug-faced partner in blackmail, Mr. James Devlin. For hours, the two men were in earnest converse over a printed handbill, which had been liberally distributed in every Long Island hamlet. The little den of the “funeral director” behind his gruesome array of caskets and mortuary furnishings was doubly locked, and impervious to the stranger spy. “It will never do now to write him any threatening letters, Mike!” was Devlin’s cautious advice. “An’ he must never clap his eyes on my face, either, for our safety lies in that! So, I can’t go down there and bluff him! You would never get back without an accident if you hunted him up in Washington! He’s a slick dog and capable of anything!” “So he is! Coward and cruel!” growled Mike, caressing the black bottle which stood between them.

“I have a plan to work him into a corner about the

papers, and so, he'll have to bleed freely later," said the undertaker, "and we can rope in the railroad company, too!" "What's yer plan, Jimmy?" said "Red Mike," brightening. "Anything to get the 'stuff' out of him! Ye see he wont come up here till the session is over, June 1st—and—maybe then slide off to Europe with his lady fine!" "Just so!" grinned Devlin, "but we'll force him to come out of his shell! Now, listen to this circular!" He slowly read the advertisement:

"Long Island Railroad.
"Office of the General Manager,
"Long Island City, N. Y.
"Nov. 1st, 1892.

"Special Reward.

"One thousand dollars will be paid for the return of a large trunk, marked S. B., New York City, U. S. A. Supposed to have been stolen from the baggage room of the Long Island Railroad—at Long Island City—viz.:

"Inward baggage.

"Checked from Sag Harbor July 18, 1892—arrived at Long Island City July 19, 1892—check 17580.

"Large yellow trunk.

"Contains legal papers, with names of Seaton Bennett and Bashford, Blake and Bodley. Clothing and linen marked S. B. Dressing case, jewelry and traveling effects marked S. B.

"The above reward will be paid for the recovery of the legal papers only, or for any information that may lead to the return of the trunk and its contents intact, or to the apprehension of the thief.

"E. R. Reynolds,
"General Manager."

"Now, what's the matter with dropping an anonymous letter to the manager, that the papers will be given up for ten thousand dollars? Ye know the com-

pany has no defense!" said the cunning Devlin. "Ye can fix the go-between. 'No questions asked!' They'll do it, and we will get the ten thousand dollars clean! If we were traced, ye can say we found them hidden away. The company will gladly do it, and then the other trash is not worth five hundred dollars! They will settle with Bennett for a few thousand more. He's afraid to press them, ye say! And he'll have to come up and face the music! Then ye can press him for another dividend. He's got plenty! And give him a good frightening!" "Jimmy! Ye're a jewel! An owl for wisdom!" cried the delighted Mike. "This'll scare him down here, and thin he can never get away! His ould partners are his attorneys! They are square min, and he tuk them only for a cover! They will of course advise him and insist on a settlement!"

There was a general hum of astonishment among the higher officials of the company when the lawyer of the road examined the dirty scrawl which two days later conveyed the proposition of the two thieves in hiding to the general manager. Messrs. Red Mike and Devlin were secure in that vilest of shadows, anonymous correspondence, while the startled railroad attorney posted off to confer with the representatives of the absent congressman. Messrs. Blake and Bodley were not slow to advise the immediate acceptance of such a proposition in the mysterious affair. "I cannot see but that it opens the door to a friendly compromise!" was the final decision of the senior attorneys. "Certainly!" added Blake. "If your people properly consider the question of damages!" "Oh! we will not stand on trifles!" remarked the friendly visitor. "I have no doubt that the trunk was rifled of the clothing and personal trinkets. They would at all events be useless to Mr. Bennett now. They are spoiled now, at any rate. We will act as soon as you confer with him and obtain his reply!"

The arrival of this intelligence at the city of Washington brought a sigh of relief to the bosom of the budding congressman. The long haunting fears van-

ished as if by magic! In the midst of his political preparations, surrounded by the efflorescence of his wife's dawning "social prominence," the Honorable Seaton Bennett jumped at the idea of a settlement which closed a door upon the dangerous past. The tender of the railroad attorney came at an opportune time, for the statesman meditated a flying visit to New York. The Speaker of the new Congress, already named in caucus, had privately notified Bennett of an important position on a leading house committee. The first annual meeting of the Eckfeldt Reduction Company was called at New York, over which the Honorable Seaton Bennett would preside. Professor Eckfeldt's paid up stock was to be delivered to him in return for a "perpetual license to use the patent exclusively, in the United States of America."

Fame awaited the man now whom Fortune and Success had crowned with Love as a gentle torch-bearer! The blue-eyed Teuton's genius had gained an instant recognition in the scientific world, and the fame of his discovery had been his advance herald, as he prepared, a rich man, to seek out the waiting "bride to be," with the Marguerite braids!

"I will only be three days away, Julie!" said the happy husband. "And when I have closed up these detail matters I am yours until the session is over! Then we will take a run away to Europe."

"I always shall feel that it was the 'Cyanide process' which brought us together, Seaton!" whispered the happy woman. "But for that, I should not have been here now, at your side! It has brought us easy wealth and shown us the way to happiness!"

Bennett's face was ashen pale as he drained a hasty glass and hurried to the station. "My God! She must never know the fearful price that I have paid for my empty honors! The Cyanide process!" He now trembled with eagerness to close up the compromise, for, cold egoist as he was, the unflinching ambition of the woman who loved him, blindly, touched his heart. As he drove past the huge Capitol to the station, he

saw the figure aloft with Freedom's shield in one hand and the sword of justice in the other! He shuddered as a spasm of fear seized him! "Oh! God! For one hour of innocence! I am a thief and a murderer! I have stolen Julie's love—and—slain one whom I should have spared!" The devil in his heart laughed merrily! For, he whispered: "He is mine forever! The 'Cyanide process' made him mine!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MANHATTAN STORAGE COMPANY'S AUCTION.

The returning New York representative tasted all the sweets of a sudden notoriety as he dashed onward on his return to the great metropolis which had honored him. Scores of hats were lifted in salutation, eager correspondents caught him "on the fly," and various office-seekers chased him to the great fortress on Nassau Street. Bennett entered the law office with a secret determination to now buy peace at any price and the wild wish to build a wall higher than China's Tartar barrier between the dead past and all his blushing political honors of the day! He was quaking, though, at his heart, for when bluff Hugh Atwater suddenly strode into the parlor car at Philadelphia he had thrown himself down into a seat by Bennett's side.

"Have you never heard a word of Madeleine Ware's fate? Never even a whisper?" said the anxious-browed Pennsylvanian autocrat. The young congressman mournfully shook his head, and then gasped: "And—you? I've not seen Bashford for some time!" "There's a man somewhere on earth," growled Hugh, "whom the fiends of hell will tear yet in flaming torments! I am half distracted. My poor

Flossie! I will tell you, Mr. Bennett," said Hugh, "Mrs. Renwick is a sadly changed woman since Madeleine's disappearance. Jimmy Renwick is simply at his wit's ends, and their only child may be soon motherless! For Florence has been always possessed of the wild hallucination that Madeleine has been made the sport of some wicked man's damned treachery! I loved that noble, pure-browed woman dearly. If I should ever meet the man who wronged her, it would be short work for one of us! I'd save the hangman his rope—by God, I would! For my beloved sister is slowly slipping away from us. We dare not harbor for a moment the idea that Madeleine has consented to a life of hidden shame and ease! Ah! Poor friendless girl! To what end? We only yearned to coop her up in our hearts and homes! There's room for fifty such, and we would never miss it! But there's only one Madeleine Ware on earth! And Bashford, too! What would he not have done for her? Tell me, on your honor as a man, did you ever see any symptom of what is called the 'double life' in any of her actions? Recall every incident!" Bennett was trembling now like a leaf in the storm! "She was a pure woman, before God, I believe it! I feel it! I know it!" murmured the conscience-stricken wretch. "This haunting thing begins to drag me down, just as it has paralyzed Hiram Bashford's golden mental prime," said Hugh. "And now, the shadow hangs heavily over my darling sister! Do you know that I will turn this Atlantic coast upside down and sift it to find that girl yet—dead or alive! Look at Bashford! He has settled Ware Hall upon her, with a reversion to my sister, and has also put in trust a princely sum for Madeleine, with Renwick and myself as trustees! He only did this to prevent any breath of scandal, and to lure the poor girl out of that arena of wild beasts where she struggled alone in the open to vindicate woman's right to a place in your honored profession! And—the Shearer money, too—awaits her! There is all this, which would have made her safe for-

ever from the world's rude shocks! Ah! God! Poor girl, loving and trusting—she went on her way alone! The fatal fetich of independence!"

The craven scoundrel's face twitched with the storms of passion sweeping over him. Fear, regret, remorse, and now the knowledge that his scoundrelly deed was unnecessary palsied his tongue, and then the train dashed into the great station at the ferry. It saved a possible self-betrayal!

"I know how you suffer! I can see it!" kindly said honest Hugh Atwater, "and you must really forgive my vehemence! My poor sister! If you could only see her you would join me in hunting this unknown wretch to bay—this fiend who has wronged Madeleine! For the inspector now confirms our very worst fears! She has surely fallen a victim to some hideous libertine's cowardly desires! If not dead, she may be worse than dead! It was not a money scheme!"

The truth dawned at last upon Bennett, that he could have found fortune, high friendship, and easily reached every noble aspiration through the dead woman's tender affection. "Loving and trusting, she went on her way alone!" Hugh Atwater's last words rang out in Bennett's ears like a death sentence, and he hasted away to the work of covering up every tell-tale track upon his snaky path in wickedness. He was in a quiver of trembling cowardice now!

"I'm here only for three days, Blake," nervously said Bennett. "Telephone to the railroad attorney that if he will pay me five thousand dollars and all your costs, I will dismiss the action and then turn in the railroad check to the company. I can go over tomorrow and verify the papers, if they can really show them up!" "By all means the best thing!" cheerfully said Blake. "You would not care to press them to the wall, and this will end the whole thing. I'll telephone at once." Seaton Bennett's face was careworn and haggard as he then anxiously said: "I will finish an important corporation meeting by two o'clock, and look in here again then. So, go ahead, and close it all

up if you can." "I will have your answer ready then," replied Blake. "Go in and see Bashford! He's been continually asking for you!"

The Congressman entered the very room where the Greek-browed girl had so often waited for his coming, with her heart beating in love's hidden ecstasy! The great lawyer sat there at his table, his massive brows whitened with a fallen flake of snow. "Heavens! How he has failed!" mused the startled culprit. For the whole attitude of the man spoke of a "letting go" on life—of the beginning of the end! Bashford rose and greeted the "successful man" gravely. "You will probably be tied to your new duties till June, and I wished to see you before I go out on my wanderings. You have heard nothing?"

"Not a word! Not a sign! Not a whisper!" was Bennett's answer, in a gasping breath. He felt the very air choking him, and he longed to dash wildly away! Out, anywhere, only far from the hollow eyes of the broken man, glaring beseechingly at him! And yet, again, a horrible fear possessed him, as if the walls would open and the pale wraith of the loved and lost would point a shadowy accusing finger at her murderer! He feared to see again that white-robed figure with arms outstretched for help, the beautiful woman, "loving and trusting, who went on her way alone!" Bashford's head drooped as he absently muttered: "Then, I must go out on my way blindly! But I charge you, by your honor, by the mother who bore you, give Bodley any tidings you may have! I must find Madeleine! And may God avenge her on those who worked her wrong!"

Seaton Bennett stole out of the office, and paused even in his flight to say adieu to Blake. "He is breaking fast!" gravely said Blake. "If he does not find that missing girl it may be a case for Bloomingdale—or worse! We are watching him privately. I begin to feel now, Bennett," said the energetic Blake, "that there's one man wandering on this earth who is not ripe yet, even for hell's retribution! He must live to

suffer! That's the real hell! Not the preacher's bug-a-boo! But the hell of a haunted life! There skulks somewhere on earth the unpunished wretch whose daily rack is the torment of a murderer's conscience!" Without a word, Seaton Bennett passed swiftly out and fled away, as soon as he dared to make haste, among the human ants swarming below. "I know that man who bears a living hell in his bosom!" the wretch faltered to himself. "Fool! Fool! And a needless—and a useless crime! For she would have led me on in love and innocence upward, in honor and peace, to a golden future! And now!" He groaned as he was forced to sit over his fellows and gloat upon the glowing reports which told how the "Cyanide process" had succeeded beyond the wildest hopes of even the sanguine inventor! There was the flush of brandy courage upon Bennett's face when he returned and listened calmly to Blake's gleeful recital of his success. "Your terms are accepted! The papers will be all ready for you at two o'clock to-morrow! Will you go over there and verify them?" "Yes!" briefly answered Bennett. "I leave all the details to you. I will telephone back to you myself, to-morrow, and you can then dismiss the suit as agreed, on payment of the compromise and costs." The congressman rose. "I may not see you again," he murmured. "You can notify me at the Arlington of the final settlement. I return soon, for the session's work is upon us now!" "Do not forget that you belong to us later?" was Blake's merry adieu. "We have a strong hold upon you! And we do not propose to lose it!" That night the guest of honor at a hastily convened dinner of political magnates, the Honorable Seaton Bennett sat down with a chorus of ringing cheers making the walls of the club room ring again. "There's a man who has leaped into fame, honors, wealth and social sway!" said one, as the star of the gathering went out into the night. "An honor to the great metropolis, and a man who will go far!"

There was none who would have envied the favorite

of fortune had the midnight vigil of the frightened wretch been followed up!

"I was a fool to have used Red Mike!" he babbled. "I should never have quarreled with him! But, I'll pacify the brute! For Atwater and Bashford are now both grim hounds upon the track!"

The morning sun brought the courage of mingling again with the busy crowd whose vestments fence in a thousand secrets, a hundred crimes, an unending daily record of conscience-guarded frailties, in every square of New York's crowded streets. By a self-protective cunning, the shaken wretch avoided his usual haunts and passed over to meet the waiting attorneys of the Long Island Railroad company. Bennett was gravely courteous as he examined the recovered papers with an affected carelessness. They seemed to be all in due order, and he breathed more freely as he noted the evident care with which they had been preserved. "I am perfectly satisfied!" he said, after a half hour's examination, and he gazed inquiringly upon the attorney. "I suppose that I must not ask how you obtained these?" was his smiling query. The lawyer shook his head. "We gave our honor to ask no questions, and that rule must be your own guide! I presume that some corrupt employee threw this trunk off the train, suspecting from its appearance that it was valuable. Of course, we will never see either it or your own personal articles, again. The trunk was probably painted over and sold to some dealer for a few shillings. Your summer wardrobe, Mr. Congressman, has been divided piecemeal among the second-hand shops or pawnbrokers!" "It was a very strange occurrence!" mused Bennett. "Did you get the check strap and check back?" "Ah! No!" quickly said the lawyer. "You see, if that should turn up, it would probably land the holder in jail. But, bless you, it is probably now in the fire or at the bottom of the East River. We will keep your own returned check as our evidence when we close with your lawyer. You

will never hear of the trunk or its contents again!" was the veteran lawyer's prediction. "I don't care to—now!" drily remarked Bennett, as he wandered away to the headquarters of Mr. Michael Doolan. He was saved! A close race, too!

The good-humored welcome of "Red Mike" bore out his jovial assertion that his visitor was "as welcome as the flowers of May." And the heart of Patrick Casey, chief Ganymede, was proportionately light as he saw the "high contracting parties" in such brotherly amity. "It's always that way with the Irish—either a hurricane or a lovely golden smoothness—too smooth to stop long!" thought Casey. "I wonder why they rowed each other? Maybe 'twas only the drink!" For that "great first cause" explains nine out of ten of all the throat clutchings of the modern world! The golden calm endured all the afternoon, while, in an inner room of the Palace of Bacchus, the congressman carefully packed and sealed his papers. "Ye see, ye were wrong to doubt me," heartily said Doolan. "'Twas some of their dirty little sneak thieves that tipped the trunk out of the car. How did ye settle?" And Bennett, glad of even the peace of the groggery, his last safe retreat, frankly told his fellow-scoundrel of the settlement. "See here, Mike!" cordially said Bennett, "I'll give you a check now for half what they gave me! I want you to watch over all my interests! I'll watch yours, too, down there at Washington! Your friends shall all be pushed ahead. And," he whispered, "if you ever get hold of the trunk and the rest of the stuff, see that it goes at once into the fire! But, not till I've seen it! I'll give you the other half if you show me that trunk, so that I can destroy it! It's the last thing left to worry me!" "Why?" buoyantly said Doolan, as he pocketed the check. "There's a thousand like it!" "Yes!" said Bennett, thoughtfully. "But my initials were on it—a thing I'll never have on my baggage again! And," he faltered, "the strap and the duplicate brass check may be tagging along with that!"

"Ah! Never ye fear!" bravely remarked Doolan. "The min who saved them papers to sell them to the company were smart enough to destroy that check and strap, and to deface the trunk!"

"Or, Mike, perhaps to keep it!" Bennett's hand shook as he poured out a drink. "What for?" roared Mike Doolan. "They bled the company good, I'll be bail, for yer papers! Now, if they tried to worry ye later about that check, they would be soon nailed by the 'cops!' There's nothing in that! Ye're all safe!"

And so Seaton Bennett was relieved at last. "I'll post ye, never fear! For all the boys over here are square with me!" "Well! Don't stir the thing up! Let it be!" said Bennett, when he had dispatched his papers to the express. "What's become of the two properties up at Fireplace?" said Bennett, with his lips trembling. "Ah! There's a lot of these here men-haden fishermen who have rented them till the children come of age. And there'll never be a whisper from there! They will wear out the two ould ranches and—there's no danger!" "They'll find nothing?" said Bennett, pale faced. "Go yer way in peace! There's nothing to find! I tell ye! Trust to me!" When Bennett rose to go he said, as he gave Doolan a private address in Washington. "You can always reach me there, by letter or telegraph. I'll stand by you, Mike! Let me know what I can do for you. There are a thousand good things coming in sight. I'll keep you always in mind! If I run up, I'll come over and see you! Don't forget to call on me, and, remember, what I want to get and destroy—is that brass check, No. 17580, and the strap."

"Oh! I'll call on ye, never fear!" laughed Mike. "As for the check, I'll keep my eye open, and for the trunk, too! You are dead sure safe now; the papers was the only thing to fear! All the rest you can bluff them on!" And then, the murderer and his black-mailer parted in a lying truce.

Before the relieved congressman had reached his club, after visiting his splendid home, Mr. Doolan and

his friend Devlin had divided the ten thousand dollars for the papers, as well as Mr. Bennett's last largesse. The two scoundrels were jovial, and yet they pondered long over the question of the missing check strap with its tell-tale check! "No! No! Mike!" was the sly old undertaker's verdict. "Never try to go to the storehouse and get that check off the trunk! We can't tell what might happen to that chest of books! Let it lay now! For if ye sent a man, he might be followed, and we would surely get nabbed! This fellow Bennett is a money-maker, and we can milk him easy! What more do we want? Let him rest a little and then work him again!" "You are right, Jimmy!" said Doolan, with a sigh. "But I was a fool not to have kept the check and strap! It's good for twenty-five hundred, and more, at any time! But we'll just now give him a bit of a breathing spell!"

The conviction that the last door left unlocked to the grim spectres of the past had been sealed forever brought a truce to the startled criminal who hastened away to the waiting honors of the capital. The very fact of the scattering of his dangerous personal property, the dismissal of the suit, and the prompt settlement seemed to remove every trace of connection between the trunk stolen from Long Island City and that lonely house by the lagoon! Seaton Bennett was easily deceived by "Red Mike's" apparent friendliness! The resentful face of Hugh Atwater and the careworn countenance of Bashford faded from the politician's mind. The coward joyed now in his past acuteness, and he gloated over the sneaking ability which he had shown. "I can defy them all now! No one ever saw me a moment with her after the arrival at Sag Harbor but 'Red Mike,' and—he is not likely to make his folly act as his own future executioner!" So, as he moved gaily on among the strange scenes of a new political career, as his mind was fed daily with the incense of adulation, he forgot at last the haunting eyes of the woman whose death had opened the door to all the greatness now thrust upon him. For he

had easily dropped, in his fool's paradise of rest and ease, into that condition which saith, "Soul! Soul! Thou hast now much goods!" There, in the great national Hall of Representatives, before the crowded galleries, he lifted up his ringing voice, and men knew and honored the brilliant lawyer. Glancing up to the gallery, there were kindly eyes there shining down upon him in love—the eyes of the earnest woman whose happy heart forgot the shaded past. And, gifted, talented, able and far-seeing, the husband went smoothly on his upward way. Julie Bennett, a swan upon the lake of Fashion, was not the least of the "social queens" who illustrate the pages of the great panoramic national volume of "the Gilded Age." The spring passed rapidly in these distractions and the summer roses came blushing forth again. There was no shadow on the brow of the Honorable Seaton Bennett as he victoriously returned to the stately home upon Murray Hill. There was a conscious pride of a newly-found power in the glance with which Seaton Bennett now faced all men. The "grateful constituency" did not neglect the usual courtesies of a serenade, a procession, and many congratulatory addresses, punctuated with red fires lighting up the soft summer night. It was a time of laureled victory.

On his way uptown, after a brief visit to his old partners, Bennett revolved at ease all the easily-gotten favors of fortune as he recalled all the rocks and shallows he had passed. "Bashford roaming over Europe, Mrs. Renwick 'ordered away for her health,' Blake and Bodley but too anxious to welcome me back into the firm! I am safe at last, for the whole storm has blown over." It was no longer a timid craven who pressed the cushions of the carriage, for Seaton Bennett gleefully decided, with an increasing admiration of himself, "I have fooled them all." On the eve of their departure for Europe, for Mrs. Seaton Bennett, too, had spread her plumage for a foreign flight, the wily congressman visited Long Island City.

"There's a great change coming over Doolan," con-

fidentially remarked Casey, who was now evidently "the man at the wheel." "He's growing strangely forgetful and neglecting himself. It's the power of whisky he's drank, and the old woman and myself, are now running the whole shebang."

Seaton Bennett could not conceal a welcome glow of triumph. "What do you mean?" he hastily asked. "Is he losing his mind?"

"Ah, he's pretty well done for now," carelessly said Casey. "He carries what I call a regular 'still drunk,' and he'll go to pieces like a flash some day. He is done up. He's getting a sort of childish like, ye know—what them doctors call 'paresis,' ye know."

Bennett's eyes blazed in a fierce secret joy.

It needed but a single glance when the failing publican greeted his quondam patron to confirm the report of the sly barkeeper. The great hulking giant only feebly dragged himself around and his trembling hand was uncertain in its grasp upon the never-absent tumbler of "blue ruin." The glassy, wandering eye and lolling head told a story which made the devil in Bennett's heart madly dance for joy. It was clear that "the beginning of the end" was very near. Bennett instantly decided upon his plan. "A short respite now may drag him over a season, but this tiger's teeth are drawn. No one would credit him now!" And then, the thought flashed over the congressman's mind that Red Mike's death would finally sever the last link of the chain which had bound him to the horrible past. Madeleine Ware's fate would soon be a mystery of the past. "I think I can afford to indulge my old friend to fool him to the very top of his bent," was Bennett's happy thought. And so he frankly drew the accomplice of his dastardly crime aside. "I am going away, Mike, over the water for a few months," said the overjoyed visitor. "What can I do for you?"

Doolan gazed in his patron's face. He crooned out, "Ye've been good and square to me and ye've kept yer word like a man. Ye sent me the money I wanted this winter. I'd just like a bit of help now.

They keep me very short, Casey and the ould woman, ye see. I'll see ye later when ye come back. But, there's something I'd tell ye for yer own good. I must think. I wanted to write to ye, but I dared not. Thank ye," the human wreck mumbled as Bennett gave him a package of notes. "What is there in here?"

"It's all right," said the congressman. "Needn't count it. Five thousand. Did you ever hear anything—anything of the trunk?"

Red Mike's head was shaken in a decided negative. "Not a thing. Not a thing, and I must think now to tell ye something, but I don't remember it now. I must wait."

When Seaton Bennett finally gave up his attempt to call the burned-out hard drinker's mind back he passed quietly out of the great saloon. "How long has this been going on?" he asked of Casey.

"He's commenced to lose himself since the turn of the spring," carelessly answered Casey. "He's fit for nothing now. The wife and I run the whole business."

"Ah," significantly rejoined Bennett, who passed out and sought the ferry. "To be husband and proprietor, vice Doolan, deceased, Mr. Patsey Casey," mused Bennett. "I see how it is going. It is the devil's own good luck. I wonder if anyone really knows of that little old matter." Bennett had long decided that "Red Mike" was the only actual witness of the passing of Madeleine Ware. "He probably lied to frighten me. There is no one to connect me with the deed left now," he jubilantly reflected, "for this man is now on the very verge of insanity, and I can trust to whisky to finish the one-sided struggle. Bottle against man, I back the bottle every time." And he went away, chuckling in joy. "I wonder what that fool wished to tell me?" he mused as he sought his home. And when the husband and wife sailed for the summer vacation, where delights awaited them far beyond the rolling Atlantic, the last vestige of the old craven fear had departed forever from Bennett's mind.

"I can defy them all. There is nothing at all to fear." And so he was light at heart, when his beautiful wife, clinging to him on the swaying deck of the steamer, cried in the happiness of a merry heart: "Next year let us take the dear old 'Raven' and make a long summer cruise to the Azores and the Mediterranean."

Flushed with success, happy and high in men's honor, Seaton Bennett lightly answered, "Where you will, whenever we can, darling, for you have made me what I am, and the whole world is ours to choose from. There is nothing to shadow our lives now." For he had deeply buried the dead past forever under those lonely sandy dunes of Montauk Point, and the man whom he had once feared, his brutal blackmailer, was only a jibbering semblance of a human being—a mere wreck on error's shore. In the full blaze of the summer of life, they went away over the main far from the memory-haunted halls of the old stone mansion by the silent salt lagoon where Madeleine Ware, loving and trusting, had gone out alone, on the dark and silent waves of Death.

The Honorable Seaton Bennett and his lovely and accomplished wife were wandering in the Tyrol upon a lovely September day of the year A. D. 1893, while the two wearied clerks threaded the mazes of the general storage rooms of the Manhattan Storage and Warehouse Company. The busy bookkeepers were at work handing out the list of delinquents who were about to be summoned by advertisement to settle the arrears of storage or, after due advertisement, suffer the loss of their goods, at public vendue, for "arrears of storage and expenses." Vault after vault was successively illuminated and a band of sturdy workmen toiled in the separation of the effects already forfeited for past dues. "What is the date of our auction, Jamison?" said the inspector, pausing before a serried mass of bulky packages in the gloomy recesses of the largest "general room."

"We always advertise on September 10 and then sell on October 2," replied the check clerk. "Shall I

get out the articles whose year expires between the advertised day of notice and the day of sale? What shall I do in such cases?"

The inspector paused in thought. "We must make no costly mistake. I think that the law is a year and a day. Somebody might come back on us."

"Now, here is a case in point," said Jamison, seating himself on a large canvased trunk, marked "A. A., Brooklyn." "Now, I have made a separate list of all these goods whose time runs out between September 10 and October 2, the day of our annual auction. For instance, this one." He stooped and examined a tag. "Books, Sept. 30, 1893. P'd to date." "Let me see," and he quickly ran his eye down his check list. "Ah, yes. P. O. Box 1758, Brooklyn. Now, if we sell this package on October 2—the year and day has run out on October 1—to be sure, but we do not dare to advertise it now in our forfeited list. They may come up at the last moment and pay or take away. We might be mulcted in heavy damages in such a case."

The inspector pondered long and then replied: "Send out a special notification to all of this class, these expiring consignments between September 10 and the day of sale. Half of them will surely pay up."

"And the rest?" the clerk waited for his superior's orders.

"I would not risk selling them till our next year's auction."

It was without effect that several bills and notifications were later addressed to "P. O. Box 1758, Brooklyn," under the initials "A. A." When the great annual clearing sale was over the vast warehouse had sent forth some hundreds of packages to be the prey of the lively speculators thronging the auction rooms. And after the annual clearance the box of books of the ubiquitous "A. A." was there, awaiting the slow revolution of the season, but marked "D. H., 1894."

"It is simply incomprehensible," mused the inspector, as he checked up the annual auction returns,

"how people of name and note seem to abandon their household gods to fate, after the care of years and all these expenses maintained for so many months. The American life of unrest, accident, changing fortunes, and shifting 'personal relations.'"

"Nothing so strange, Mr. Inspector," said the chief bookkeeper. "We have twenty-two safes out of our one thousand that have not been visited for two or more years. The city banks are loaded down with unclaimed money. The hotels and private storehouses are crammed also with abandoned valuables. These people are some in the New, some in the Old World, and some in that shadowy land known as 'another and a better world.' Some in jail, some gallivanting over the earth with other people's wives and husbands. Some judiciously avoid society by reason of 'circumstances not within their control,' i. e., the locks and bars of Sing Sing. Some are energetically trying to see the bottom of the bottle, all else forgetting, some insane, some have perished in moving scapes by flood and field, and I doubt not, some of our depositors may have been brained by the Sioux Indians or served up as 'fricandeau à l'indigène' by the cannibals of the perfumed isles where people neglect Bell and Redfern and go in for 'the altogether.'"

"Yes, it is a queer Walpurgis dance," mused the inspector, "this kaleidoscopic life of New York City—the pace that kills. I have been 'stood up' in the shades of Madison Square for a quarter by a man I hailed at college as America's rising Webster. I have seen a girl in the morgue with whom I have danced, the fairest of the rosebuds, at an inaugural ball. When the record of the dying year is made up many a despairing soul around us shudders to look back and note the gradual slope which led downward to a life worse than hell. There are no uncertainties in hell, I suppose, and these poor wretches 'wait beneath the furnace blast,' now fearing only annihilation, in a dull, hopeless misery. The Manhattan storage warehouse locks up many a sad secret, for its records tell too

plainly of the 'sliding down' process, which seems to occur in a ten-fold ratio to the sliding up."

There was a physical reason why the gentleman responsible for the false address, "A. A., Brooklyn, P. O. Box 1758," failed to promptly respond to all the urgent demands for the payment of his arrears. "Mr. A. A.," in the person of Michael Doolan, Esq. (late of Long Island City), had paid all the arrears of a wasted life and an outraged bodily constitution. "Red Mike" had suddenly "passed over" in the interval between one desperate attempt to "break the record" on local drinking and the second fearless dash at John Barley-corn.

The lengthened cortege of hastily gathered up hackney carriages attested his "local prominence." The waving banners, weird insignia, and braying bands of various local societies, greatly impressed the "small boys" who burned to emulate the record of the great Doolan. His long-suffering wife, with a modest pride, surveyed the great concourse which accompanied "Red Mike" to the only rest he had ever known, and calmly returned to continue the business of poisoning the community, wholesale and retail, relying upon that young tower of strength, Patsey Casey. It is true that the new silk hat, acquired for a proper display at Red Mike's obsequies, "furnished forth" the energetic Casey as a resplendent headgear, when, a few months later, he "dried the widow's tears" by a marriage, which enabled them jointly to carry on the business at the old stand.

And so the mantle of Elisha descended upon this Elijah, who acquired much gear and inherited the vigorous relict, as well as the personal and political wisdom of the late principal "heeler" of Long Island City. The "hatchments of woe" disappeared soon from the door.

But the one who sorrowed longest for the man who had drank too constantly of his own "firewater" was James Devlin, the popular funeral director of the city on the East River. The lengthened items of a gigantic

bill, comforting in the snug sum total, brought no smile to his grave face of sacerdotal mein.

Devlin claimed as of right the selection of the mortuary monument of his partner in the vigorous blackmail campaign and he was the author of the inscription which, to this very day, sets forth in deeply cut letters the virtues of "Red Mike" Doolan—those virtues so strangely discovered after his death. For even Doolan, thug, rounder and publican, had his friends, "whose fond hearts refused to discover the faults that so many could find." At his wake—an event of a historic prodigality in the line of "creature comforts"—it was generally admitted that he was a good provider and a tireless worker in the cause of Tammany. Devlin, who, however, "aye loot the tear fa' down," was smitten by the suddenness of Doolan's taking off. Red Mike had given to the timid old scoundrel but half of the secret needed to hold the Honorable Seaton Bennett in a state of fear and apprehension. For the undertaker was not aware of the exact location of the hiding place of that last legacy of the unpunished crime of the congressman.

"It was a fool thing he did not confide in me and give me all the papers, and the marks, and the directions. Sure, it's just the loss of a gold mine to me," wailed Mr. Devlin uselessly.

So, in the first months wherein the "whole community" mourned that "energetic and prominent business man, Mr. Michael Doolan," there was none who sorrowed as deeply as the man who had lost forever the key to the closed cave wherein Seaton Bennett's gold lay. There was no "open sesame" token in Devlin's darkened mind.

These tidings, which brought a new life to Seaton Bennett and stilled his last flickering fears, were communicated to that traveling statesman by Doolan's successor in business, as well as the "connubial contract." Patrick Casey had already assumed that American brevet of distinction, "Esq.," which marks the man of "property and influence." He now longed

for local political leadership and even ventured to call himself to the attention of the Honorable Seaton Bennett in that capacity. His letter was a very well spring of joy to the man whose callous conscience was now, day by day, indurating into a dull defiance of his past.

"By God! This is a windfall!" the excited tourist cried as he read over the comfort-bringing letter of the barkeeper bridegroom. "Red Mike died suddenly! That last five thousand was the price of my freedom, for Casey, his successor, in bed and board, knows nothing. I am free, free forever! As for the other fellow, the brute threatened me with, he could not have seen the deed. Red Mike, himself, did not. If I were bullied by him, should he ever turn up, I could denounce him for the murder. No one ever saw me with the girl. The 'Raven's' dark wing covered her. And night helped us, too, with her cloak. The boy—even the boy who drove the baggage wagon—never saw Madeleine's face. The old Indian crone is probably dead and no one would notice her drunken ravings. And the trunk! Ah! That was my master stroke! That compromise! For if it should ever turn up, I can easily prove by the railroad company that the thieves had it in their possession for months."

Mrs. Julie Bennett laughed in glee to see her jocund husband's hilarity. "You are in a very good humor over your news, Seaton," she fondly said.

"Ah, darling, what do I not owe to you?" he said. "The Cyanide process is even a greater success than I ever dreamed." And the fool forgot in his heart those stern, strong words, "Be sure, your sins will find you out."

CHAPTER XIV.

A MILLIONAIRESS DETECTIVE.

The golden days of September, 1894, were chilling into a crisp autumn as an anxious man paced the lonely garden walks of Ware Hall. Those who had seen Hiram Bashford, alert and radiant, in his mental powers a splendid figure at the bar, carrying all before him, would never have recognized this dejected wanderer in the paths, now drifted deep with autumn leaves.

A letter, tightly clutched in his hand, fluttered in the gusty breeze as he started and turned away from Philip Ware's marble tomb gleaming under the old elms. For the sight of the tomb now maddened him.

Bashford's name was withdrawn forever from the firm wherein Blake and Bodley now battled with their old legal foes, and the eyes of the two overworked lawyers now often turned toward the sea to await the home-coming of that brilliant young Congressman, the Honorable Seaton Bennett.

"We must either bring Bennett back to us," said Bodley, "or else, get a man at once to replace him. For Bashford's breakdown has been a sore loss to us. But we cannot go on forever thus, mourning for his missing friend, Madeleine Ware. That was the strangest disappearance that I have ever known," mused the senior.

Blake looked up dreamily as he answered, "I wonder if Hiram is right? Could that fellow Shearer or his gang have revenged themselves on the innocent girl for the stern pursuit of the whole set of swindlers down there? It seems incredible, and yet, Bashford is moping out his days there now, hounding down everyone whom he thinks capable of working her any wrong. It seems entirely too much to believe that she hurled herself out into a life of secret shame. There

has never been a sign or a token of her—not a trace.”

“I’ll tell you, Blake,” answered Bodley, “the chief of detectives always fancied that Bashford himself was the cause of this gifted woman dropping her identity forever. He surely could not have been mad enough to think that he could make such a woman happy.”

“Ah, my friend, men never grow old in their own eyes,” replied Blake. “If he did wish to marry her, it was a great mistake on her part. She would have had all that a woman desires.”

“As to money, position, display—why, yes—certainly,” continued Bodley. “But does the woman herself, count for nothing?”

“Very little in these days,” said Blake. “The social whirl is a mad one nowadays and the race for ‘place’ of the vigorous American rosebud girls is wilder than even the hurdle jumping at the Horse Show. I’ve often thought myself that Bashford had something to regret in this matter—some hidden burden on his soul. He was very foolish ever to turn an inexperienced girl into the hurly-burly of New York professional life. She was only a sacrifice to a false ambition, a mad, premature assault upon the present fitness of things. The day of the woman lawyer is not yet come. But you and I must stop up our gap in the firm here at once. I fear that Bennett has become so intoxicated with the public life which he really adorns, that he will not come into harness again. There’s an example of what a rich wife does. Seaton Bennett could have aspired to a leadership at our bar. He would never have been an eminent judge. But as a counselor, an attorney, cool, crafty, able, sly, untiring, reckless of his means to an end, he was a candidate for the very first honors in the practical conduct of cases. Now, his wife’s ample fortune smothers any natural ambition he has, other than to shine as a public debater and a merely representative young New Yorker. I have always wondered how he ever captured her. She has been the cause of half his Washington successes. A wonderful woman, sir, a wonderful woman! And, she

brought him such a fortune. What did Bennett say in his last letter from Fayal about their coming back?"

"There is the man himself in every line," said Bodley, handing out a letter. "If the renomination is pressed on him, he cannot refuse. If not, he will come back to us. But, it has been 'pressed on him,'" Bodley sneered. "I'm told his wife put up thirty thousand dollars for the Tiger on the first election. This 'Cyanide gold process' is enriching them, too. What is money to them? The inventor has a castle on the Rhine now, built with a portion of his share, and the Bennetts dominate that powerful company, as well as the 'Golden Eagle' mine, which the widow always controlled. She is a money spinner, that bright woman."

Blake was eagerly reading the young statesman's letter. "He will give us a positive answer on his arrival, about October 1. 'If the "Raven" has good luck in her home run, I will be with you then.' As he is nominated again, we may as well give him up. Shall I speak to Jerolemon? He will jump at the chance to join us."

"I think that I would wait for Bennett's arrival," said the cautious Bodley. "Let him decline with all due ceremony. He has a great deal of law business, and, we may as well have that."

"Right you are," said Blake. "I'll tell Harry Jerolemon that we will give him an answer by October 15 or 20. He is the next best man I know of to Bennett. How Bennett has got on! A millionaire, a leading Congressman, with a splendid house, and a lovely, dashing wife. He has all he could crave, save children, and he has a brilliant renown to bequeath. I'm sorry to lose him. There is a happy man, if ever a man was happy."

Bodley was walking up and down with his hands clasped behind him. "Do you know, Blake," the cautious counselor said, "I have often thought that this rich widow had something to do with Madeleine Ware's disappearance, herself? Bennett and the girl were down there in Delaware trying that case, you know."

They must have been left together a great deal. Now, I'm told that this widow Martyn had a little cloud on her own past. Bennett was pushed right out with a sudden bounce by Tammany so as to dazzle an admiring world. I wonder now if the widow broke off an engagement with the Ware girl and paid her heavily to clear out. It is the very strangest thing that Bennett's marriage and his election came on together. And he was out there, too, working the widow's mine all summer. Hugh Atwater tells me that his sister still insists that Bennett had some secret influence over Madeleine. He certainly took her disappearance very coolly."

"Yes, and he would take anyone's disappearance very coolly, as long as he was not affected in purse or person. Bennett is as hard as grindstone grit. You don't know him," promptly said Blake. "Not a man of his college chums has ever even traced his family antecedents. He is simply a successful Ishmaelite."

"True," mused Bodley, "and yet, I have always wondered why the girl never turned up to claim her own money or to accept Bashford's rich provisions for her future. If there is a secret, you will find out some day that she died with it. And, neither Bashford nor Bennett will ever betray her. Strange that to all the advertisements, not a single word of reply, not even a rumor, has ever reached the chief."

"I am afraid that she lies now in an unknown grave. She was a magnificent woman," sighed Blake. "I'll answer for Bashford with my life, and I really can't see where Bennett comes in, in this hidden drama. He is as cold-hearted as a stone. She never awakened a thrill in his steely heart. I believe there was a hidden quarrel between the girl and our old chief and, she dropped out of sight to revenge herself on him. Remember, the inspector stoutly maintains that she engineered her own disappearance with a consummate skill."

Hiram Bashford, in the lonely halls of the old Ware mansion, read and reread Seaton Bennett's cautious

answer to his own last presentment of the new theory, the Shearer hypothesis.

"I can hardly see the value of such a bloody revenge," wrote Bennett, "but, you must remember, that Shearer was greatly humiliated at the auction sale of the Hall, his public reputation for probity was shattered, his married life embittered, and his friends finally forced to disgorge all the stealings of the Kaolin swindle. There is the groundwork for a deep hatred, and yet, these times of piping peace do not show up a modern Caesar Borgia very often. Shearer had good cause to hate you. Yours was the hand that struck him. If she had been your daughter, your sister or your promised wife, he might have plotted to deal you a return blow, but where, how, would it have profited him? I have always felt that the lady had some private reasons for a sudden departure. Now, even Robert Shearer could not have foreseen that. So I feel powerless to help you now, but on my return I will aid you to unravel this mystery if I can. Women have many strange eddies in their life currents!"

"I must ask him to be more plain. Is he sparing me anything?" mused Bashford, as he gazed at a splendid face shining down on him. It was the painter's magic art which called Madeleine Warè back again to the lonely watcher. "Oh, God! If those silent lips could only speak!" groaned Bashford. "But, I must wait—wait. If Bennett knows aught, it is my right to know it now." And it seemed to the broken hearted man as if the Greek-browed girl would fain murmur to him the dark secret hidden yet behind the veil of the dark past. Ah! Those sweet lips were sealed forever!

"He will be back here very soon. He must aid me. For there is an answer somewhere. God will hear my prayers." And so, Bashford, too, waited to see the "Raven" glide back home again with "the distinguished statesman and his brilliant wife." The voyage had been the realized life dream of Julie Bennett's perfect happiness and so, homeward they came, to newer triumphs

and a higher pitch of proud achievement. For the world was at their feet, and life and love were passing sweet.

While Hiram Bashford counted the dragging days at Ware Hall, until the "Raven" should bring back the man on whom Fortune smiled, he was busied with a labor of sacred love. It had been the one dream of the lonely lawyer to rehabilitate the grandeur of Ware Hall. Since the day when he had mistaken Madeleine's proud refusal for a repulsion, caused by their disparity of age, he had lived in but one dream. To see the beautiful Portia wandering in these witching garden walks a happy wife, a woman sheltered from the fierce storms of the world, nevermore to beat upon her defenseless head even though another man should be her bosom's lord, the great-souled counselor rising above ~~self~~, had fondly pictured the summer of that splendid womanhood. Ah! No! Fame is not enough for woman! Love she craves, she will have, even at the cost of her bosom's peace. For, without it, her life is incomplete. And the late vengeance of thwarted love, of youth's warm desires, sweeps over the hearts of the women, grandly, great, at last, to prove that Love alone is lord of all. He stood, with his withered laurels on silvered brows, alone in the work and, in self-renunciation, had dreamed of the double happiness of seeing Madeleine happy with another. He had restored the Hall to await the return of its absent young mistress, now a mere shadow of the past, a graceful hovering specter lingering at the threshold and yet never passing over. "You can trust all your memorials of Madeleine with me," he had fondly written to Florence Renwick, "for, if she never comes, the home which waits for her shall be yours, for you and your children! Someone who has loved her, shall rule over these garden walks. Someone who reveres the memory of the dear one who went, loving and trusting, on her way alone, shall keep the vandal foot of the stranger away. Let the inviolate shades of the old

mansion be the speaking memorial of the loved and lost."

There came back to Bashford a thousand times the implication of Seaton Bennett's letter, "I have always felt that the lady had some private reasons for her sudden departure." "I will see him at once! I will insist on his giving me an explicit reason for those meaning words," growled the morose old man. For their ring seemed to be false. It was a base desecration in thought of a pure shrine, always draped in the majesty of a spotless womanhood. For months, the Renwicks and Hugh Atwater were acquainted with Bashford's solemn injunctions. The slightest clue was to be followed up and mutual telegrams were to call the forsaken friends together to act in concert. Ever full of new theories, Hiram Bashford's letters to Florence Renwick revived again her suspicions, born of those womanly intuitions which had translated the unspoken message of Seaton Bennett's eyes. So, while more than one pair of eyes watched the sea for the "Raven" to come up from the under world, while the journals and political clubs anxiously awaited the arrival of the brilliant orator to lend his voice to the clamor of an exciting campaign, while Patsey Casey forged out into the open as a budding "boss" in Long Island City, there was no relaxation in the veiled search for the clue to Madeleine Ware's mysterious fate.

"This is altogether too much," growled the great Inspector of New York police, seated in his guarded retirement in the plain red headquarters building on Mulberry Street. He rang his bell and handed two letters to the chief detective. "I want you to send out again a secret general alarm about this old Madeleine Ware case. Here is Bashford again worrying me to death about the lost girl. He is a power still in New York. Again, the Atwaters and Renwicks. They are influential Pennsylvania politicians and millionaires. All that outfit will accuse us of 'laxity and supineness,' as the journals put it. Note especially every case of unexplained woman crime within five hundred miles.

Call on me! I'll take the thing in hand again myself! If that girl ran off through a mere pique, it's about time that she was traced. She only had the revenues of five thousand dollars on which she had lived a year. She has never turned up in Europe. You see, this Mrs. Renwick still hangs on the idea that Bennett had a hidden influence over the girl. She has only a woman's simple reason, 'Because.' And yet, she says still that Bennett's face betrayed him on her first sudden visit. There may be something in it. We know stranger stories than that. Old Bashford is square as a die. Bodley, too, is above reproach. You traced out all young Blake's secret life. An easy story to find. But you never once got behind Seaton Bennett's outer shell. A young fellow of his grade with no 'private life.' I always distrust a man who has not the passions and failings of his time of life!"

The chief glared at the glass cases around him, filled with the gloomy mementos of a thousand desperate criminals. He suddenly fixed his eyes sternly on the silent captain. "It was a 'silk stocking' scoundrel who led away or trapped this girl. I believe that she is dead. She had nothing for anyone to steal. I'll tell you what, shadow me this sly party Bennett, when he comes back."

The captain stood, wide-eyed and wondering. "Why, he was busy all that summer with his rich widow's mine, that great patent launching, his lightning change into a Congressman, and getting out of his law business."

The inspector was standing mute and obstinate as he trimmed and lit a cigar. "I want every relic of dead, unknown womanhood that turns up carefully kept. Telegraph to all these people on the slightest possible clue. Keep Seaton Bennett shadowed! He may have some undercurrent in his life. Do you see the whole pagoda of his fortune, his mushroom rise to million-aireship, to a political value, depended on that one rich woman's favor at that time? It was taken 'at the flood'—that sudden fortune. This Renwick girl was

a schoolmate of the missing girl. She once knew the very beating of Madeleine Ware's heart. She insists that Bennett had, in some way, crossed the line of indifference in his relations with the missing girl. Let us suppose for a moment that there was really an entanglement. Bennett was bent upon marrying a woman who could not be easily deceived. You know who she was." The captain bowed in silence. "Then, if Bennett had to get this girl out of the way, it was vital to keep her out of the way—to hide her forever." The inspector's glassy eyes were now fixed on the smoke wreaths of his cigar. "It is just what a cool, secretive devil like Seaton Bennett would do, if he had to do it. Hide her, until the last trump, if he could!"

The captain shook his head. "You are building the roof with no house under it. Why, even Mrs. Minnie Walton, who had city apartments at the same house, tells me that Bennett was only a few times at the girl's rooms, and only after he had been given the firm business in his sole charge. They are old friends."

"See here, captain!" cried the inspector, springing up and pacing the floor. "Miss Ware disappeared from Mrs. Walton's house at Mamaroneck. The Walton woman took a swell European tour. She is game and 'fly,' as journalists are. Suppose that she was really needy, as journalists often are! That Bennett got her to lure the inexperienced girl away! And that he wished to avoid an imprudent marriage engagement! Now, the writer suddenly went away—the girl goes to Mrs. Walton's lonely house at Mamaroneck—and then her disappearance, Bennett's booming fortunes and his marriage, follow on quickly. You must shadow Mrs. Walton as well as Bennett. If they are found to colloque together, just let them go on. Watch over her place at Mamaroneck. You must keep a strong searchlight on West Chester, Long Island and the whole Sound. Bennett is expected here every day. I wish a strict secrecy still kept up. I am going to work on this idea. If I get 'probable cause' I will have them—both—taken down to Center Street. I wish

to leave Bennett always free handed, but watch him. Detail Jamieson to watch the house at Mamaronock and see if the Honorable Seaton Bennett ever leaves his lovely wife to wander out there. If he does, it means 'business,' for neither Bennett nor Mrs. Walton wear their hearts upon their sleeves. If an arrest is made of anyone in this case, let them be put 'on the small book' and held at the Tombs, till I see them myself."

The detective captain was startled. "You seem to have worked out the case from the first."

"I have worked out what Bennett might do if he wanted her out of the way. Mrs. Walton's calling is a shield and safeguard. She is a roving, free lance of journalism. She knows everyone, can be seen anywhere, and can receive anyone. If it turns out to be anything at all, you'll find that she has been made Bennett's catspaw. I did once think Bashford knew something," said the inspector. "But, I shadowed him in vain."

"You never told me," cried the astonished captain.

"I know several other things that I have not told you," smiled the great police chief. "My first fear was that Bashford was really responsible for her absence; that she would in due time reappear from Europe, married to some traveling American, or perhaps stay there in the ranks of the nobility." His sneer was not lost on the detective. "Why not so, as it is?"

The inspector rose and put on his coat. "Because Bashford carries a broken heart. This thing has made him a mere wreck. He has dropped a practice of a hundred thousand dollars a year to go and mourn over the girl in the home that he wanted to give to her. Men do not do that for a lost mistress! Hugh Renwick tells me that his will stood solid in her favor, and the legal firm is shattered by his withdrawal. Do you now watch for every trace of any foul play to young womanhood. I fear only one clue will some day be found—in her grave. Don't forget that we must telegraph the Renwicks and Bashford instantly if any-

thing should turn up." The sturdy inspector then walked away, with a brief nod, leaving a man behind him who was in a maze of suddenly worked fancies. "The 'old man' is deep. He has been digging away at this on his own account. Now, by the gods of Greece, he has the start, but I'll cross the line ahead. If she is to be found, I will find her—dead or alive." He sat for an hour smoking, thinking over all the hidden chapters of New York's crimes in high life. "Why not?" he muttered. "It was no vulgar hand which has wrapped this mystery around her fate. There were no property interests at stake. She must have trusted and loved someone." The captain started as he suddenly remembered. "They were alone together at the office in vacation time. Ah! If those downtown office walls could only speak!" And he went away, stirred up to a vague suspicion of a crime, conceived in cowardice and carried out in cruelty. "There may have been a motive, and also the need for sudden action. The man who put her away had a devil's reason, and so, betrayed a woman's trusting love."

There was a motley crowd gathered in the sales-rooms of Richard Waters' Sons, Nos. 100, 102 and 104 West Twenty-third Street, on the morning of Tuesday, October 22, 1894. For two days, a dozen van loads of assorted family gear had been crowded into the auction room of the famous New York selling agents. There had been a grand battue of the "old horse" relics at the Manhattan Warehouse. The check clerks and the alert inspector threaded once more the gorged caverns of the great depot and the brawny porters rolled out the forfeited goods on the way to the lottery of a "dead horse" sale. Numbers of packages of easily recognizable goods were secretly marked by the various bargain hunters, who swarmed like human ants in the great auction rooms.

"There's no mistake about 'A. A., Brooklyn' this year," said the tally clerk, as the canvas covered chest of books was dragged away to the elevator.

"No. It was forfeit last year," said the inspector. "Let it go down."

"That fellow was more particular to keep his books than to pay his bill," laughed the tally clerk. "He has simply loaded that trunk with camphor and carbolic tablets."

"Shall we find out what's in it?" demanded the head porter, with a wink.

"Don't bother," growled the inspector. "Just as likely a lot of old account books, or some of the lumber of a big business. Don't disturb it. It's well packed, and, we are lucky to get a year's storage out of it."

And so, on the morning of the sale, a score of curious women and hawk-eyed men, nosing over the gathered spoils of the year, speculated upon the out-turn of the heavy chest. Long before the auctioneer's hammer rose and fell the advertisements had been conned over by the gathering crowd. "No chance of trouble about these purchases?" said an anxious woman to the waiting auctioneer, as she scanned the long catalogue of marked items with a tantalizing generality of description.

"Oh, no, madame," snapped out the auctioneer. "You only take chances on the contents; as to title, we are bonded auctioneers, and the company have fulfilled the law. There's the regular weekly advertisements for four weeks, and, we guarantee that the law has been strictly fulfilled."

The woman pushed her way through the crowd, poring over the announcement, dated "Offices of the Manhattan Storage and Warehouse Company, Lexington Ave., cor. 42d St.—Seventh Ave., cor. 52d St., New York, Sept. 10, 1894."

There were seventy-eight different owners and parties in interest named, some of whom even scintillated on the outskirts of the famous Four Hundred, for even the "high rollers" and swans of fashion can now and then drift on the reefs of a financial shortage. The legal notification to pay was duly followed by these ominous words, "And, in case of your default in so

doing, the said goods will be sold at public auction on Tuesday, the 22d of October, 1894, by Richard Waters' Sons, at their salesrooms, in the city of New York, as authorized by the statute in such cases, made and provided." The signature of Lawrence Wells, president of the Manhattan Storage and Warehouse Company, was the final attestation of this "dark horse" sale, without reserve.

For three long hours the clamour and clatter of a human Babel rose and fell in vicarious gusts of battling over the alleged bargains. Hook-nosed Israelites, greasy of coat collar, and yet bediamonded, dragged away their prey, with eager eyes, paying in dirty bills from fat wallets, and then scattering off to their dens on First and Second avenues. Triumphant women bore off strange trophies, while here and there, disgusted discoverers bewailed the few dollars ventured upon packages of attractive appearance. Few were aware that an ingenious "probing" had taken place before the sale and that "straight tips" led many a smart bidder to the certainty of a handsome profit. The fever of bidding had somewhat abated and the rooms were thinning out when the auctioneer, with wearied eyes, glared around for a second bid on the chest of books marked "A. A., Brooklyn." With one smart rap, he sounded a loud call for another bid. "Three dollars. Do I hear four? And, gone to Mr. —."

"Cash," was the curt reply of a grave-faced Fourth Avenue dealer in second-hand books, who lurked in a debatable nook just above the head of the Bowery, a second-hand den, where the moon-eyed book worm sought bargains, and the needy student, sly servant and broken-down scholar furtively sold or pawned their treasures. The shades of night made the little room in rear of the book mart strangely gloomy as the man who was proprietor, clerk and slavey, at once availed himself of the off hour to examine the nature of his bonanza.

"Carkins, the bookman," dropped knife and hammer, and sought the "corner shades" several times for

"spiritual reinforcement" before he conquered the double folds of heavy tarpaulin canvas, and unknotted gordian intricacies of heavy spun yarn. It was a famous packing. By his one candle, he at last surveyed the revealed inner casing of the package, which proved to be a large trunk marked S. B., New York, U. S. A. "There must have been some object in going to all this trouble. I have made a big strike," growled the bookman, as he shut his two swinging leaves of the front door and proceeded now to essay the opening of the trunk. "It's a pity to break the lock. It's a beauty," and the bookman sized up his treasure trove with pride. "The trunk alone is worth ten or fifteen dollars." It was while rolling it over, with straining effort to save the shilling's worth of cord lashing the trunk that the fatigued Carkins saw hanging to an end handle a railroad strap and brass check. "Now, that's devilish funny!" said the startled dealer, as he held the candle to the face of the brass plate dangling at the end of the leather strap. "Long Island Railroad Company, Sag Harbor to Long Island City," he read off letter by letter, "and the number, 17,580. They always take those things off baggage. I wonder if it is all regular," and then, a sudden suspicion seized upon him, for the odor of drugs and chemicals was overpowering him now. With a white face, he sought for the nearest locksmith. "Pshaw! The Manhattan Company are dead square." Mr. Carkins paused at the saloon to take a refresher. "It's a beauty lock," he said to the workman, who stood beside him with a great hoop ring of a hundred keys. "If you smash the lock I won't pay you!" The locksmith grinned as he lit his cigar.

"Trust to me. I'll open it so I won't tear a sheet of tissue paper," and then, they entered the little book den in a state of good humored jollity. Five minutes after the locksmith had been tentatively feeling the intricacies of the splendid trunk lock he growled, "Get me some more candles. It's as dark as the grave here. The lock swings loose, and yet, the trunk does not

open." "Carkins, the bookman," looked on with a dawning suspicion as the smith examined the refractory package. "That's a very strange thing, Carkins. There's an extra broad iron rim put on here over all the joints of this trunk, and with clinch nails, too. I'll have to get a good thin cold chisel. You don't wish the trunk spoiled. I'll be back in a jiffy."

"Stay, I'll go with you," said the nervous tradesman.

Before they departed, Carkins showed to the smith the trunk's strange adornment of a strap and brass railroad check. "I am afraid there is some 'funny business' in this. It may have been stolen. It may be some jeweler's sample trunk that has been hidden away till the thing blows over." And Carkins then began to faintly doubt the good fortune which had fallen upon him. On their return, the two men attacked the refractory steel band vigorously. The smith held the light and adjusted the cold chisel as Carkins tried his manly pith with nervous blows of a heavy shop hammer.

"There you are. She's loose all round now!" cried the perspiring locksmith. "Give me the hammer handle." With a vigorous pry the rusted lid flew loose, and the workman made one wild spring for the door as his eyes rested upon the revealed contents. "No, you don't. For God's sake, stay with me!" screeched Carkins, as the two men struggled at the locked front door. They had overturned the candles in their sudden rush, and only one flickering gleam lit up the little back den. The frightened smith faltered. "We must go for the police," as they retraced their steps, for the overturned candle, still flaming, had set fire to some loose paper litter. "My God! It's a dead woman!" they murmured, while the blood curdled at their heart cores. "Some one has killed her, and hidden her away!" said the smith, regaining his shaken nerve. "We must not touch a thing. Let us go together!" babbled the dazed bookseller.

"Yes. I'll take this. This baggage check. It may be a clue."

"And copy the trunk mark, too!" the practical mechanic said, as he scrawled down a hasty description of the package.

In five minutes, a cab rattled down the Bowery at breakneck speed. The two men eagerly pressed into the waiting room of the plain red brick on Mulberry Street, where the inspector had just defended his pet theory about Madeleine Ware's disappearance to the dejected captain of detectives.

"I'll tell you, chief, she may have given us all the slip," the stubborn detective said. "If she was in our bailiwick, my men would have found her by this time."

"You'll find you're wrong. I feel that the woman has been made away with. Some day——"

"What's up?" cried the chief, springing quickly up, as the sergeant in waiting dashed in, whispering a few words. "Come here!" cried the chief to the detective, and in the little consultation room, they soon faced the excited visitors from Fourth Avenue. A few quick sharp queries, and then the chief snatched the brass check from the hand of the trembling Carkins. "You say this check was on the trunk, and the strap, too?"

"Yes," murmured the man, "and, there's a dead woman in there, sure enough."

The chief was poring over a printed handbill. He raised his head, and banged upon his hand-bell. "Sergeant," he gravely said, "take these gentlemen up stairs. Treat them well. Don't leave them an instant! Come with me, captain!" sharply commanded the inspector. "Get a carriage at once. Let the other man wait. He will be well paid." Drawing Carkins aside, the inspector remarked, "That brass check is worth a thousand dollars to you, my friend. Read that, and keep your mouth shut. You and your friend also! Talk to no one but me. I'll be back in an hour."

"Here's the description of the trunk and the lettering on it," volunteered the locksmith. "I copied it just now."

"You won't be forgotten," nodded the inspector, as

he seized the slip of paper. Darting into his office, he slipped the portrait of the lost lady of Ware Hall in his breast pocket, and a packet of letters. He glanced at the scrawled characters of the smith. "By God! I was right!" he cried, as he snapped the desk lid. "Have you the keys of the store, captain?" demanded the chief.

"Yes, and the sergeant is in the carriage."

"Come along then," and the three officers sped away up Center, through Grand, and along the Bowery, now crowded with human thugs, gaudy women jackals, and all the idle crowd upon whom these terrors of the night, work their guilty schemes. On past the cheap theaters, low drink hells, mock auction haunts and fence pawnbrokers, the carriage dashed until the nearest corner to Carkins' was reached. Then, one by one, the officers swiftly approached the little book den. The nimble sergeant had opened the door as the superiors reached him. There was no spoken word as the three men entered the back room and closed the door into the little shop, whose front door was then carefully locked and barred. A half dozen candles and the sergeant's lantern illuminated the interior of the noisome little cubby hole, as the chief alone proceeded to examine the exterior of the trunk. He held a printed handbill and read, as the sergeant, with shaking hand, lighted his labors. "Yes! By Heaven! And, the check!" growled the stern officer. "Now, gentlemen." There was deathly silence as the great criminal expert turned with a sigh and gasped, "It has been a dastardly job. Look, captain! There's no mistake!" For, the lost was found at last, and there was no longer a mystery in the case of missing Madeleine Ware! The poor child's terrible fate demanded instant action—the sternest vengeance. But five minutes was spent by the two chiefs in an earnest converse. And then, the detective captain buttoned up his overcoat, seizing his night stick. "Send this telegram first. Then come back with the precinct captain, and the carriage."

It was a gloomy vigil, this silent watch of the two

grave-faced men until the return of the detective. In ten minutes there was an active council of war at Mulberry Street headquarters.

When, two hours later, Carkins was allowed to re-enter his book mart, under the escort of an officer, the locksmith was at his side. There was not a single vestige of the unwelcome heavy case, with its loosened canvas covers. Not even a shred of rope, nor a scattered nail, not a bit of steel hoop, nor a string was to be seen. And, nothing was said as the policeman bade them "Good night," save his last injunction of absolute secrecy. Together the two frightened companions swiftly left the shop, whence the strange auction purchase had been deftly spirited forth.

"I think that I'll let someone else run the shop for a week," whispered the bookman, as he wandered away to a distant refectory with the companion of his dark secret. All that he knew was that a thousand dollars' reward depended upon his silence.

And as the stars swept silently on their way to the West the great chief was weaving his fatal web. For he had now sworn a mighty oath of vengeance! "That yacht must be met at quarantine, and this man taken off. Not a word, not a glimpse of a newspaper to warn him. Keep him on the police boat till night, then he goes 'in solitary,' at the Tombs, until we are sure of all our evidence. The boat must be in at any moment now. Don't wait an instant in this matter." And the chief murmured, "She is a game little woman after all—this millionairess detective. She held to the right clue. He did this cruel deed." For he held in his hand a telegram, "Coming to-night," signed "Florence Renwick."

There was a heavy-hearted man at Ware Hall who only waited for the morn. For Hiram Bashford had read Florence Renwick's words, "Come to New York instantly!" He vaguely discerned their dark import, as he walked the lonely halls.

And a thousand miles seaward, the swift "Raven" was slashing along on her homeward way, bearing a

man who slyly smiled, "It has all blown over. I have fooled them all." And on shore, with tears in his eyes, the stout inspector gazed down now at the dead girl who was to meet the gaze of her loving friend. "She shall be avenged!" he swore.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE SMALL BOOK AT THE TOMBS.

In the gray of an October morning Florence Renwick stood in the room of its hiding place with her husband watching her closely, as the great inspector slowly lifted the lid of a black draped casket. Neither of the men could hold back the eager woman, whose wailing cry, wrung from the heart's core, rang through the secluded room. "Madeleine! My darling! My poor murdered darling!" The notes of the first passionate wail were echoed back sharply as the little milionaress dropped upon her knees in a storm of grief.

"See here, chief! I can't understand this!" whispered Renwick, drawing the chief into a corner. "It is our lost Madeleine, and yet, so natural."

"There's not a moment to lose now, Mr. Renwick," said the chief. "There has been a devilish skill used here. The most careful work of the embalmer has preserved the poor girl's body as an awful witness. So the man whom we wait for now was not alone in his crime. He has probably no technical skill. There are no marks of violence, and the very fluids used would defeat any attempt to search out the particular chemical agent of death."

"And it was?"

"Poison!" solemnly said the chief, interrupting young Renwick. "I have done nothing officially, as I wished to spare your dear wife any needless shock.

We needed an absolute identification. Moreover, the devilish slyness of this scoundrelly deed demands our taking instant means to first apprehend—”

“Seaton Bennett, the cowardly murderer!” cried Florence Renwick, with flashing eyes, as she bounded to the chief’s side.

The two men stood amazed, for the despondent clouds had vanished from Flossie Renwick’s face and she stood quivering there with a wild eagerness to be at the work of vengeance.

“Wait a moment,” gravely implored the inspector. “Do you know these?” He then handed two rings to the excited woman. “They were found on her, poor dead hands. It is an incomprehensible hardihood. The trunk was marked S. B., New York. The maker easily identifies it as the one that he sold to Bennett for a European trip, and the check and check-strap were still on it. Now, these two rings are also marked ‘S. B. to M. W., Oct. 13, 1891.’ He gave them to her, I easily believe, but he never gave orders to put the initials on. It was her own loving work later. A memorial of hidden love. The trunk may have been used by him and his accomplices for something else, but some one has played him false. His accomplices secretly stole that trunk from him. They hid it, and for one purpose only.”

“And that was?” said Renwick, breathlessly.

“Either revenge or blackmail! We can trace all this out later. I have decided not to disturb Bennett’s home or his old rooms till he returns. He keeps his old bachelor rooms yet, for political purposes. I shall not notify the Railroad Company of the finding of the lost check, till I have my man locked up in secret. For our best hold upon Seaton Bennett is to be his own confession. The police boat is waiting down at quarantine now, and it will watch the lower bay, day and night.”

“I never saw those rings, but I can lead you now to the place of the murder,” resolutely said Florence Renwick. “The woman’s intention was correct. That scoun-

drel married darling Maddy secretly and then trapped her to her death with her wifely love. You can easily find the jeweler who sold this valuable ring. I don't believe there is another ring in New York City with a square sapphire and two square diamonds of such beauty. They are old stones."

"Ah, dear lady!" said the chief. "I can trace this bauble before night, but Bennett has a thousand political friends. He might escape us. He is billed now to speak at the last grand rally before election. And the Tiger's cubs would all spring to his aid. He must be simply immured alone. First, I want to connect him directly with the mystery. Such a mind as this Seaton Bennett's never consented to the use of the Manhattan Storage Warehouse. It was done by some cunning wretch who desired to hold him down. We all have our enemies—in this world," he sighed.

"Will you send a good man on a trip with me, before you take any other steps? You will not search any further at the Storage Warehouse?" Florence Renwick was trembling now with eagerness. "I want the man you send to have the two rings."

"I can give you the very best detective captain I have," said the puzzled chief. "But what will you do, dear lady?"

"I will go up to Greenport at once and from there to Sag Harbor," resolutely said the little woman, as her husband gazed at her in wonder.

"I don't understand," said the mystified chief.

"I will confess now!" said Florence Renwick. "I put a Philadelphia private detective on months ago to trace out all Seaton Bennett's secret life of two years ago. He began his secret trip West, when he gained his fortune in this Cyanide process, by using Mrs. Martyn's yacht to run down to Prince's Bay to the laboratory. Then, he strangely went off to the northward on a fortnight's cruise, and the 'Raven' later touched at Greenport, she then, made a night run over to Sag Harbor. Bennett got off there, and he turned up next at Baltimore, St. Louis and Helena, Montana.

The yacht ran down to Cape May and took Bennett to Baltimore, then it came back here and laid up."

"You are a wonder!" said the chief, whose bronzed cheeks were now a shade paler. He had scrawled down but two words in his note book. "Cyanide process," he muttered, and then quietly slipped the little book in his pocket. "Mr. Bennett leaped to fortune at once, by marrying this rich widow, on the strength of that summer's wonderful work," he said aloud. "He made this Cyanide process a success."

"Yes," doggedly said Florence, "and, he murdered our darling Madeleine to make way for the rich political widow. I see now her whole secret. He had married Madeleine privately and he only feared Mr. Bashford's resentment."

"So, Bashford would have married the lady?" mused the chief.

"I think so, now," answered Florence. "And it was only a strange pride that kept them both silent. Bennett feared Bashford, as his place in the firm depended on the dear old man. My God! He would have given his very all to have made Madeleine Ware a happy wife."

"Then you must be away from here before he comes!" cried the chief. "How did you find out all this about the yacht's movements?"

"I put a sailor detective on the yacht," answered Mrs. Renwick. "He was just getting very confidential with the steward of the 'Raven' when the boat sailed away suddenly for Europe on this cruise. He was left behind. He had come down to Williamsport to report secretly to me."

"And he found out nothing about any woman being on the boat?" The chief was very anxious now.

"I had put the man on his guard. That inquiry was to come later," answered the little detective.

"I'll arrest Captain Hank Moulton and this yacht steward, too, as witnesses," said the chief, "after I have lured Bennett quietly off the 'Raven.' I will keep the yacht down at quarantine, till we are all safe. This thing must be kept out of the papers. If the locksmith

and the bookman do not babble, we can lead up to the trunk. What will you do at Greenport?"

Mrs. Renwick bent her head and pondered a moment. "It is a little town. The captain, with the rings and photograph, can look around among the hotels, lodging houses and drivers for anyone who may have seen our lost darling. Her beauty would not be soon forgotten."

"It is a very good plan," mused the inspector. "I will not deceive Hiram Bashford, but I'll tell him that you have gained a promising clue and I'll then keep him busied for two or three days. Will you go, also, Mr. Renwick?"

"No!" promptly answered the little lady. "I will be unrecognizable in a working woman's every-day garb, but Bennett's friends might recognize my husband, who is well known around Southampton and all the sporting grounds there. I find out that Seaton Bennett used to spend his days of leisure up there at the Long Island Sporting Club's shooting grounds."

The inspector started, and then suddenly checked himself. "I will send the captain off on the same train with you. Just go over to Long Island City, and then await him at the depot. When can you start?"

"I will buy my whole outfit at a department store as I go uptown, take it up to the hotel, dress there, and go over at once to Long Island City, and Mr. Renwick can wait at the Waldorf, for any further orders from you."

"That's right. You are a genius," said the chief. "The captain will have the aid of the law officers at Greenport and Sag Harbor to back him up, and he will also use the police telegraph. You must never forget to avoid all reference to any crime, and above all, to the man whom we are waiting for—the man who made the Cyanide process a success."

The last words of Florence Renwick as she left the darkened room were a whisper of loving tenderness to her husband. "Ask him if you may not send some flowers down here." For the millionairess detective

was now only a sorrowing woman. That night a cross of pure white roses rested upon the satin lined casket, where poor Madeline Bennett's head now rested upon the white pillows.

There was no whisper in the great, busy Babylon of the finding of the loved and lost. No lynx-eyed reporter, no babbling underling had fathomed the secret of the box marked A. A., Brooklyn, and a wholesome fear kept the lips of the smith and the bookman sealed as yet.

Together, by the shores of Greenport Bay, the captain walked, under the glittering stars, with the woman, in whose gentle soul a fiery thirst for a bitter vengeance now burned.

"I have been all through the town. I have questioned the clerks at the great Shelter Island hotels, and so far, I have found out nothing. I fear that we may have to wait some days here." such was the first discouraging report. "And we have not very much time to lose down here, for the 'Raven' may now come in at any moment. Of course, Bennett's detention would make a public racket. He is also a sly lawyer. He would be soon brought up on 'habeas corpus.' And his defense will, of course, be that the trunk was stolen from him. It is so adjudged by the experts who handled the case. He gave in a sworn list of its contents."

"Where are they? I have a plan," said the earnest woman. "I must work rapidly. Once that Bennett is put on his guard, all may be lost! I do not care to stay at the principal hotel here. I would be recognized, perhaps. You go on with your own work. Tomorrow, I will be out early and take a carriage. I will look over all the respectable lodging places as if in search of rooms. If Madeleine came down here to meet Bennett, I can use her picture as a reference. Then, my husband can come up and join me, until you have arrested Bennett. We can run back on the line to Manor, and then go over to Sag Harbor. For that cross line was Bennett's only chance to meet Made-

leine. She did meet him, either at Sag Harbor or else here."

"You are right. I can keep my quiet search up at the place you have quitted until perhaps publicity will call on us to use all the local force of justice at the north end of the island. That trunk certainly came back from Sag Harbor, and something has happened to the thieves who followed murder with theft and proposed to blackmail Bennett later!" "Let me give you an old detective's hint," said the officer. "Wear no gloves and put these remarkable rings on. It may attract the attention of some one. For, even you can see that the men who left that one jewel of great price on the dead girl's hand either acted in a frightened haste, or else intended that it should be a guiding clue. It is the darkest mystery of a 'double cross' that I ever knew." Long after Florence Renwick's tired eyelids had closed in sleep, the detective captain silently walked the beach where the lapping waves sadly murmured on the shore. He strolled along and went into the New London boat landing, to get a light for a final evening cigar. A brawny baggage porter stood there, regarding him curiously.

"Hello, Cap! Are you not lost?" said the blue jersey-wearing baggage smasher. "Well," answered the captain, "this is a wonder. You are the only detective I ever knew to go at hard work." "Oh, I only came up here to get away from whisky and the boys. The girls, too, for that matter," laughed the ex-officer. "I have a good show here, and my wife's got a little home down here. What are you here on—the old thing? Looking up something?" "Yes, I am," said the captain, with a sudden decision. "I am looking up a woman who is missing from a little yachting frolic here." "Ah, I see. Family discord. Some other man. I used to know nearly all the summer beauties here. They swarm around these yachts like fire-flies on summer nights." "Take a good look at that," said the captain, and he quickly thrust the photograph of Madeleine Ware under the baggage-man's eyes. "When

did you lose sight of her?" said the porter, smiling, as he dropped his cigar. "Two seasons ago—in the summer carnival." "Well, I'll be damned if it is not singular," slowly replied the man. "Tell me! Tallish woman, splendid figure, and not over twenty-four; and had a bran new trunk with her, like a pretty school teacher on a frolic?" "What do you know about her?" almost shouted the detective. "It's worth big money to you." "There was a lubber came in here one day, on a yacht, with a national flag flying on the foremast. They then box-hauled around here for an hour or so in the bay. Now, that very night, this very same woman was dumped down here, trunk and all, and she waited two hours in that very dressing room. She was a regular beauty, and she went away, trunk and all, in a boat sent late that night from the yacht 'Raven.' I took particular notice, for the girl was worried and excited, like. I made sure to see the name on the stern of the yacht's boat. There was only a crew of sailors in the boat. Now, I took this woman for something 'out of the regular.' She gave me a two dollar bill for watching her trunk and shoving it aboard. There was no man with her. But, a fellow was on that yacht, waiting for her." "How do you know?" growled the captain. "Because he let her wait two hours, till it was dead black dark, so no one could see her get aboard."

"The damned coward!" blurted out the captain. "Now, that was a hasty job, too," continued the baggage-man, "for that yacht slid out of here in the night. Old Cap. Corning's wife was hunting around here next day with a little black hand sack that the girl'd left at their house. She stayed a week there, on the wait. But, the 'Raven' never came back, and the cap.'s wife has got that sack yet. I go up there often. He's an old friend—skipper of a menhaden steamer." "Tell me where he lives," shouted the detective. "Down on the spit. Every one knows the skipper. His cottage is a pretty one, the only decent one there." "Did you notice anything about the girl's dress or her belongings?" eagerly queried the detective. "Yaas," drawled

the baggage-man. "I got her a glass of water. She then asked me all about the boats. When she gave me back the glass, I noticed that she had a splendid ring of great square stones, good for five hundred. No school marm, says I." "You were right," sharply said the official. "I'll see that you get your tip. Not a word till I see these Cornings," and the captain wandered away to the hotel. It was far too late to arouse his beautiful assistant. "Strange, strange," mused the policeman over a good-night toddy and his last cigar. "It was a throw-off from first to last. The job was done over on Montauk Hook, somewhere. But who did it, and who helped him get her out of the way?"

In the establishment of Bacchus whose splendors had vastly increased since the demise of "Red Mike," Mr. Patrick Casey, now an alderman of Long Island City, that very evening had the honor of entertaining the grave-faced inspector of police, who was suddenly interested in the Long Island Sporting Club. There was the incense of several fragrant Havanas floating in the room, when the chief casually remarked, "I always wanted to get over and see Doolan before he died, about that missing trunk case. Bennett always has raised a racket about that, and it never turned up."

"Ye're right," replied the amiable Casey. "But, Mike, God rest his soul, was a close mouthed devil. Ye see, he stood in great fear of Bennett, and they had many dealings. They had a devil of a row about that same bloody trunk." "How was that?" languidly said the chief, whose eyes were gleaming. "Well, ye know Mike was the very devil's own. He'd been up the Island a week that time with Bennett, looking at a little place out on Montauk Point. There's an old stone house up there they were going to buy if the steamers to Europe were put on, to land there. It has a fine landing. Now, Mike came back alone, and Bennett went away out West. Then came all this racket about this trunk. I learned after Mike's death that the railroad paid ten thousand dollars to get the papers back that was in the trunk. And, by the

powers, Mike paid off his last mortgage about that time. The money wasn't in the business. I've built it up since," said Casey, proudly. "But, Mike gave Bennett the 'double cross,' I'm thinking." He laughed heartily. "What was it?" said the chief with a beating heart. He lifted his empty glass and cheerily "called on" a bottle of Pommery. "I don't mind telling ye; Mike's dead and gone. The boys must have scooped them papers and things, on the way. For Mike did have a trunk when he came back from that jaunt. He put the boys up to the job. He had it canvased up double, and then sent the thing over to a storage warehouse in New York. I shipped it for him. He had filled it up with stones I think! It was as heavy as lead. He must have robbed the trunk. I remember I paid a year's storage on it all. Ten or twelve dollars." "I don't see why he took all that trouble," mused the inspector. "Ah, he was the devil's own! He just did that to hide the trunk away. For there's a thousand dollars reward out yet for it. Red Mike would have nailed the company for that reward, when it was safe. I give him back the receipt, and I have had the missus often look for it, since we 'jined forces.' But he was a sly devil, like. He had a whole lot of hiding places. We're still finding hidden things all the while. He cunningly stuffed them away, when he was drunk. Maybe old Jim Devlin, the undertaker, would know. Mike used to keep his private things in Jim's safe, when he was dodging the ould woman. 'Twas put in the Manhattan, I'm sure, that trunk."

The inspector joined heartily in the laugh. "And so you think that Red Mike put up a job on his best friend!" jovially cried the chief. "Oh, he was none too good. Sure, Bennett fell into a very soft thing. That pretty widow, a million, and his place in Washington. He's the fool for luck. It never seems to get tired of following him up." "You are right," energetically said the chief, as he glanced at his watch. "Bennett is dead sure of a re-election." "Ye must keep this dark," said Casey, earnestly. "'Twould set

the railroad men wild. They'd bother the ould woman, too. She was a mighty good wife to Mike, and she's a better one to me." "You can trust me," said the chief. "Let me know if I can help you at any time. Keep straight, my boy." "Oh, I'm on velvet," laughed Casey. "I know too much to go crooked."

"I fancy I will have now a little audience with Mr. James Devlin," was the inspector's decision, as he paced the deck of the ferry boat. "But, first, I will turn that lovely place at Montauk Point upside down. Bennett must be faced with the last proofs. The job was done up there, beyond a doubt."

When Mrs. Jane Corning exhibited her spare rooms the next day to Mrs. Florence Renwick, she timidly suggested "payment in advance," as the invariable rule. There was a keen, shrewd sizing up of the spirited young stranger lady's modest dress, and all her slender belongings. "It's late in the season, and I rent the rooms now to you very cheap," remarked the good matron, who had nervously observed a strange man wandering by and remarking the pretty front garden. "Perhaps he is another customer. He might stay the winter," and so she gently lifted the usual weekly rate several dollars. Florence Renwick was strangely pale, and there were tear marks in her eyes when she descended from arranging her slender outfit. The very walls seemed to speak to her of the beautiful one who had gone out from the little cottage, loving and trusting, on her unknown way, alone. The disguised millionairess trusted rightly to woman's curiosity, as she displayed, with a secret deftness of arrangement, several photographs of the woman whose mute lips could not join in that cry for vengeance which trembled upon her sorrowing sister's lips. The little Pennsylvanian wandered an hour by the silvery strand, gazing out upon the smooth blue waters, where the "Raven" had waited for the innocent orphan. There was a keen interrogation in Jane Corning's eyes as she met Florence Renwick at the door on her return. "Was she your sister? Did she send you to me? Why did you

not tell me?" And the good housewife bustled away. "Here," she cried, in triumph, "just as she left it. Of course I have not emptied it. There are only papers and little things." "Ah, you have her splendid ring on now," babbled the woman. "I tried every way to find her again, but she had gone off on the yacht that sailed that night." The pale Florence Renwick did not hear the housewife's chatter. She could not even see the face of her own picture, as she held up a photograph, on whose back her own hand had traced the words, "Florence to Madeleine. Ogontz, May 15, 1888." There was a flood of blinding tears in her loving eyes, as she murmured, "She thought of me, the darling one, at the last." A few dainty trifles, the old family seal of the Wares, a few folded letters, where her own handwriting told the story of an undying love, and, a jeweler's ring box, with the firm's name therein.

"I must send a telegram at once to my husband," gasped the little Pennsylvanian, as she sought the silence of her room, and there, on her knees, the gentle wife poured out to God's high throne, her heart's purest prayers for the resting of that departed soul. "I should have told you before, that—she is dead," faltered Florence, as the creaking village carryall bore her away "to town." There was no lodger in Mrs. Corning's cottage that night, and long before the dawn of the next day, the chief had the tell-tale ring box in his hand.

But the detective captain, with a half-dozen searchers, was far away on his errand of discovery at the lonely house by the lagoon. For the incoming "Aurania" had spoken the yacht "Raven," one hundred and fifty miles out. And there was joy in Tammany Hall. For the silver-voiced young congressman was sure now to be on hand, "for the last grand rally."

Mrs. Jane Corning was relieved when her new lodger, departing for the distant city of New York, retained the rooms, paying the rent for a month. "We shall need to come back here again, together," said Florence Renwick, "for I love the very rooms where she looked out on the beautiful bay."

Mr. James Renwick was for the first time in his life a deliberate deceiver, while he watched over the impatient Hiram Bashford, now eagerly awaiting the arrival of Mrs. Renwick. It had been a positive injunction of the alert police chief that Bashford should be kept in absolute ignorance of the awful secret of the strange discovery of the case marked "A. A., Brooklyn." "I must have a long conference now with your wife, Mr. Renwick," said the chief. "I will see her disposed at the Waldorf, with all due care, and you can occupy poor old Bashford with various delays. His doctors tell me that any sudden shock may kill him at once. I must have Bennett and these yacht people safe in my own hands, and hold them locked up in secret, till we have gone all through the old stone house. I have telegraphed up there to the captain to spare no effort, for he has already found the boy who saw Bennett and a young lady leave the 'Raven' on the night of its arrival, and conveyed their baggage to this deserted house by the lagoon. There our trail now ends, but I know now that it was this 'Red Mike' who drove that carriage."

Hiram Bashford was still waiting for the return of Florence Renwick three days later, when a servant called away the young husband from his long guardianship. The young man's hand trembled as he read the words penned by his anxious-hearted wife: "Come down to me now at the Waldorf. The yacht 'Raven' is telegraphed at Fire Island, and the police boat has gone down."

"I must leave you now, Counselor," said the young husband, as he grasped his hat and stick. "I cannot tell you all yet, but Florence soon will. She will be with you soon. And promise me that you will not leave the hotel. My wife will join you here at once."

"Renwick, have you found her? For God's sake, tell me all!" cried Bashford, as he clasped the young man's arm. "I can not. But—Florence knows all, now—and—she will be here, in half an hour." Hiram Bashford saw not the golden glory of that Indian sum-

mer morning, as his head dropped on his folded arms. He divined the worst of news. "They are bringing her home—at last—my poor darling!" On the stairs of the Fifth Avenue, James Renwick met Bodley, coming up to pay his respects to the old head of the firm. "How is he?" anxiously demanded Bodley. "He is only a magnificent wreck now," replied Renwick. "See here, Mr. Bodley, this may be a matter of life and death with Bashford. Do not leave him alone an instant till my wife joins you." Bodley turned pale. "Have you found her?" he gasped. "There will be news—sad news. My wife will tell you, but not a single word to Bashford, for he may go down like a log. I will come back here, later."

"I understand," slowly said Bodley, as he gloomily mounted the stair, "but, thank God, Bennett will be back soon and we must all now get around our poor old chief, and try to brighten him up."

When Renwick reached Mulberry Street, after dispatching his startled wife to guard Bashford from any sudden disclosure, the inspector was closeted with a stern-faced captain in plain clothes. The Pennsylvanian was shown right through a mob of morning callers. "Ah! Just the very man!" said the inspector. "Sit down, Mr. Renwick. Is your steam launch all ready, captain?" The man in mufti nodded. "Then get away at once. Take two customs inspectors with you and take full possession of the yacht. Put two of your best men, out of uniform, aboard that boat and hold the captain and steward as prisoners. Mrs. Julie Bennett is to be treated with all due courtesy—God help her! Keep her aboard and mystify her in some way, till I give you orders in her case. As to Bennett, your customs inspector is to ask him on board the launch, and you may say that the yacht has been reported for alleged smuggling. Steam straight out to the police boat with your prisoner. Keep Bennett locked up there. Not a soul is to speak to him. You are not to lose sight of him for one moment, till you land him secretly after midnight in the Tombs. Put

the name down on the Small Book—"John Doe, disorderly conduct." The warden has his orders. I'll be down there myself. Send a man up here with a coupé for me the very moment you land with him. Remember, not a soul is to see him, or speak to him. Your place depends on your strict obedience."

"Shall I search him?" the anxious captain asked, glancing at his watch. "There's no time to lose now."

"Only for arms. Let him have all his own personal articles, but, he is not to be alone one moment till safely landed in his cell. The yacht is to stay down there in the bay in charge of the customs inspector. The collector has given his orders. You'll find your two customs men waiting on the police boat. Telegraph to me from quarantine in cipher."

"Now, Mr. Renwick," briskly said the inspector as the captain sprang away, "just ten minutes for you. I have kept all this quiet so far. And we will have that brute within four walls to-night! I only wait now for the detective to come back from Montauk Point. He will be here at nine to-night. He's over at Sag Harbor now, and he has found the trunk with their whole tourist outfit, buried in the sand near the old house. I must have your wife here to identify that poor girl's wardrobe if she can. Then we have him pinned down. It all depends on that."

"I will bring her down at once, chief," said Renwick. "But what can I do with Bashford? I am afraid to leave him." The Pennsylvanian briefly sketched Bashford's awful suspense.

"You must go back and pledge Mr. Bodley not to leave him—not to be out of his sight for a moment. Poor old Bashford. He will accuse himself for going away on that long diplomatic trip. It is true that it never would have happened if the poor girl had not been thrown perfectly defenseless into Bennett's company. This damned mixing up of a surface professional life with the automatic undertow of womanhood is the ruin of all these brilliant girls out of place. Poor things! They will always turn the blind eye to the sea-

shore. Now, I have the whole thing narrowing down to a V trap for this damned schemer. I have shut that book fellow's mouth. I gave Carkins last night a thousand dollars, and I saw him give the locksmith two hundred and fifty of it. The railroad check was well worth that. And so, they will not talk. My best man went over all the jewelers' shops yesterday. Fancy—our home-coming rascal really bought that fine ring at Benedicts, and the salesman naturally kept a slip of its delivery. It was not marked S. B. and the date was not put on there, but the date is nearly correct. They did not sell Bennett the wedding ring. The clerk recognized Miss Ware's picture as that of the person who took it away. But he did sell Bennett a gold cigarette case, marked S. B., with a crest, at the same time. The thing caught Bennett's eye, he ordered the marking and took it away with him later, when he paid for the ring. I fancied that he would buy such a ring downtown. It's a natural thing for a downtown man to do. I will warrant that your wife is right. There was a previous secret marriage, and the poor slaughtered girl bought her own wedding ring alone uptown, and had them both marked later."

"How do you know that?" said the astonished visitor.

"Oh, she would trade near her own apartments. It's always a woman's way. I am having all the little shops within a mile of her old rooms examined to-day. Let your wife break the news of Madeleine Ware's death to Bashford, and say that in a few days he can verify it. Remember, Bodley must stand by him now. Blake can relieve him. I must have both you and Mrs. Renwick down here to-night."

"I cannot understand her European letter," slowly said the mystified young man.

"I can," vigorously cried out the inspector. "That letter was not dated and it had no address. This arch scoundrel sent it over to Europe by a messenger to be mailed back, and I would give a year of my life if the scoundrel were still alive. For the man who was Bennett's chum in his Long Island wanderings went over

for a run about that time, and I have found out he was truly in Liverpool when the decoy letter was mailed. He has escaped, but, by God, Seaton Bennett shall pay for this cowardly murder with his wretched life!" The table shook under the impact of the inspector's fist, and Renwick went sadly away. "It was the devil's bribe for the congressional place and the rich marriage," mused the inspector. "Seaton Bennett played a double game, and his life is the forfeit. 'First winners, last losers,' as the schoolboys say."

It was three hours later when the inspector, busied with another mystery, lent ear to his outside man's report. "I went in to the Fifth Avenue to ask Mrs. Renwick about the plain ring," said the man, "and she at once remembered the little black bag found at Greenport. There was a common ring box there and the address fortunately within. A cheap Sixth Avenue store was the place where the wedding ring was sold and the engraving done. There is the order book tag, and it was a young woman who had the two engraved. The jeweler recognized the three-stone ring and his own work."

"That's all right, Moffatt," said the chief. "It bears out our built-up story of a secret marriage. She would have a wedding ring, poor child, even if she bought it herself. Such tender, womanly fancies."

The long day wore slowly away, as the anxious inspector gazed hungrily at the clock. He thirsted now for the stern vengeance of the law, and chafed at the delay. "Suppose that scoundrel should make another landing! If this thing were to leak out, the slightest suspicious hint would be his signal for flight. But he is in the dark. What the devil was Doolan about? Did he steal the poor girl's body to incriminate Bennett? It was a strange holding over of the fatal evidence. John Barleycorn must have driven this low fellow mad. And yet he had his criminal scheme of his own—some low rounder's trick. For there is no postoffice box 1758 in Brooklyn." The chief himself

had taken a glance at the books of the Manhattan Storage Company.

The acute Jamison, loitering over his books, easily divined that the inspector was perhaps on the track of some stolen archives. "Strange thing about that case of books, sir," the clerk volunteered. "People very seldom pay advance storage here. The fellows who put that in probably forgot their storage bill. It's often so. Time reels itself off so quickly. I lead a dog's life here. Some day those fellows will turn up and then give me a round cursing for letting the things go."

"Not those fellows! Never fear!" growled the chief. "They are a long distance from here now."

"Skipped out?" flippantly asked Jamison.

"Permanently retired from business," gravely answered the official as he stalked away.

There was a silent circle all that day gathered around Hiram Bashford as he gazed hopelessly from one pitying face to another, at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. His voice trembled as he vainly demanded every detail of the hiatus in the murdered girl's last days. All in vain was his urging, for he was sadly bidden to wait. And so he only knew that the light of his life had fled forever. He suddenly bounded up from his chair. "If there has been wrong done, I'll—" The words died away upon his lips, as his head fell forward.

"This is the first call," said the physician, hastily summoned. He led Florence Renwick out of the room, while the men busied themselves with the attendants. "When the great lawyer goes, it will be a Dean Swift case. He will begin to die at the top."

And the leaden clock hands crawled on slowly as the sunset shadows darkened down on the Square, where the autumn leaves now rustled sadly down. It was a day of the dead.

Under a strong swinging breeze the weather-beaten "Raven" came dashing on homeward over the crisp curling waves toward the highlands of Navesink as

the golden sun sank to the West. There was a score of great craft all thronging the channel, and the busy coasters flitted about like white phantoms on the blue sea. Great tugs dragged their long lines of barges, slowly creeping on, while the great "liners" sped on in majestic sweep over the light sea, which never lifted their keels an inch. There were two happy hearts lingering on the quarter deck, where the Honorable Seaton Bennett now stood with his beautiful wife clinging to his arm.

"Will we be at home to-night?" she asked, with all a woman's yearning for her own fireside. For well she knew that the cable had prepared all for this homecoming of the triumphant young statesman.

"There's only a brief delay at quarantine, Julie," said Bennett, pressing the fond woman's rounded arm. "I suppose that they will put a customs man in charge. We can get all our belongings off to-morrow. I wrote to our people at the Hall to have no political demonstration."

"That is right. I only want to be at home once more—with you," was the happy wife's reply, as she gazed in pride at her husband. "Honors can wait. For they cannot do without you. And, they will claim you soon enough."

The graceful boat dashed along like a giant sea bird, her great sails wing and wing, and far above them at the main trunk the private signal fluttered under the long streamer pennant.

"Shall I run up our colors, sir?" asked the bronzed captain, touching his hat. He had the American ensign already cast loose, and the sailor stood halliards in hand.

Hank Moulton was startled as Bennett sharply cried, "No! No flag! They know who we are well enough!" For a sudden gust of memory had swept away the golden mists of those two years of wondrous success, and he saw again that flag floating as a signal to lure beautiful young Madeleine Ware to her death. It was the very flag which had streamed out in the breezes

blowing off from Greenport where the betrayed orphan had gone, loving and trusting, on her way alone.

"Customs launch, sir," briefly reported the skipper, as a little boat filled with men now shot along over the smooth water when the yacht danced over the quarantine line.

"Better anchor. They will perhaps keep us here over night. It's very near six o'clock," said Bennett.

"I think that I will go down into the cabin, Seaton, while you are busy with these gentlemen," said Julie Bennett, as she shivered slightly, for the evening chill was in the air.

Bennett bent his handsome head and kissed her fondly. "Welcome home, darling," he whispered. "We have the dear home life to begin all over again."

"I am so happy, so glad, to see our own fireside again," the lady murmured as she went below.

As her graceful form disappeared the anchor rattled down and the Honorable Seaton Bennett, his face wreathed in smiles, stepped briskly forward as three men clambered over the rail. The senior spoke a few earnest words to the returning congressman.

"Why, certainly! I'll just say a word to my wife and get a great coat," was the unsuspecting answer of Bennett. He darted below and cheerily cried: "Just going aboard the customs steamer to make the usual declaration. I'll be back in half an hour, little woman." And he pressed a last good-bye kiss upon her lips, for two soft arms had clasped him in a loving adieu.

"Captain Hank Moulton, gentlemen!" said Bennett, gaily. "The best sailor I ever saw."

"These customs gentlemen are in charge, Moulton," was Bennett's last words as he sprang into the launch. Turning around, he waved his handkerchief as a sweet face followed him from the open cabin windows with an arch glance of mimic dismay.

There were two sturdy men, blue shaven, who watched the launch speed away, and nudged each other significantly. "It's a go," said the first, "but I'm devilish sorry for his poor wife." And the other sighed

and said nothing, but he narrowly eyed the steward, as the captain called him up with the usual courtesies. "That's our second man," he whispered to his mate as the steward went below with his wine tray.

"I am afraid that there is some little trouble with the customs, madame," said Captain Moulton two hours later, to the anxious woman, who waited in the cabin of the "Raven" for her unreturning husband. "The launch has just run alongside to say that Mr. Bennett will not be back till morning. I can't understand it. He may have run up to the city to get a customs broker or ship lawyer."

And it was late that night when the lonely Julie Martyn closed her eyelids. For their home-coming was now shaded by this untoward incident, and she murmured words in prayer for a man who was now securely locked in the strong room of the police boat.

Seaton Bennett's face was ashen pale and his eyes were bloodshot, as he raved in vain. But the stern police captain who stood beside him had a brawny assistant at his elbow. "I can say nothing, sir. I regret this trouble. Don't force me to iron you!"

And, raging inwardly, Seaton Bennett glared at the two guardians over him with the fierce stare of a tiger at bay. "I will have satisfaction for this outrage!" he yelled.

"That is not my affair," was the captain's cold response.

It was two o'clock at night and nothing but a draught of water had crossed Seaton Bennett's lips, when the man drowsily watching him opened the door in answer to a sharp, imperative knock. The police steamer had been moored at the New York dock for an hour. "You must come with me now," the tall captain said, as Bennett sprang forward.

"Ah!"

There was a brief struggle, and for the first time in his life, the proud man, who vainly battled with four stout policemen, felt the snap of steel upon his two

wrists. "Carry him if he will not walk!" shouted the captain.

And then, the struggling man knew that the doom he had so long feared had come upon him. The busy devil in his heart glibly counseled the man whom he had made his prey. "I have fooled them all," was Bennett's lightning decision. "I will fool them yet. They have nothing whatever to show against me." And he walked with a firm step to the waiting carriage, which dashed away through the silent streets. And yet, busy, comforting devil and all, he shuddered, an hour later, when the hollow clang of an iron door resounded, and he knew that he had been, half dragged, half led, into a stone cell on the second corridor of the Tombs.

No stone idol gazing out with sphinx-like face was more mute than the burly man on guard who watched the prisoner's vigil. The blood beat upon Seaton Bennett's throbbing brain, and he threw himself down, dressed as he was, on the rude couch, after slacking his thirst like a panting dog. He knew now that the struggle for his life had already begun. And yet, his cunning brain told him that the old-time panther alertness alone would save him. "This is only some dirty trap," he muttered, and then he turned his face to the wall. But sleep came not to his eyes!

Below, in the office of the Tombs, the inspector himself had verified the safe arrival of the caged victim of the mysterious vengeance of Providence. "Not a soul is to see him. Keep all the reporters in the dark. Remember this," said the inspector, as the warden escorted him out to the great pillared porch of this gloomy fastness of hydra horrors. "Just enter him on the small book, till further orders." The great criminal hunter then sought his rest in a gloomy triumph. "It is astounding," mused the inspector as he locked his chamber door at the Astor House. For he had business of moment early in the morning.

"It was a shrewd thing of the captain to sound the sands around the old house by the lagoon. This fellow Doolan must have had some dark scheme of long-

continued blackmail. This trunk found under the old signal station was filled with Bennett's own belongings mingled with the poor girl's slender outfit. Now, she had left all her valuables behind at the Mamaroneck place, and Mrs. Renwick can only identify the few little mementos which she would take with her, even in her hurried journey, to the meeting place. Yes! He must have deluded her away under the pretense of going West, and then, killed her at that lonely place. How? The physicians must determine that now, if that process has not complicated the search for proof. And the helper? Was he only a tool or an accomplice? I will know soon, for Mr. James Devlin, too, will be in a solitary cell to-morrow night. I'll worry the truth out of him. Mike Doolan's death may give this cur Bennett a fighting chance for his life, for this undertaker has been a decent man of his class—just a popular low grade Irish undertaker—the secular high priest of a dozen of these burial societies. If he is innocent he will at once hasten to clear himself. But, Mr. Seaton Bennett, your race is run! Thank God, there's no publicity yet, for I would then have to bring Bennett out into the open, and there would be a terrible fight for his life. Juries are juries! What a mockery of justice."

The eclipse of sleep cut off the perplexed inspector's ruminations upon the unreliability of the modern jury system.

It was ten o'clock when the rays of the sun awakened the man whose frown had been the terror of the "fancy" for long years. Springing from his couch, he hastily dressed. "I'll take a street coupé, drive home, freshen myself up, and then telegraph over to Long Island City, to see if I have gathered in my man Devlin. Then, for Mr. Seaton Bennett!" And the chief bustled out of the side door and sped away to his uptown home. He had scarcely entered his own dressing room after a long ride in the fresh morning air, when the telephone bell suddenly called him away from his hasty toilet. He was cheerful, for a dispatch awaiting

him told of the fact that James Devlin was neatly ensconced in the Long Island City jail. "He must know nothing of the discovery. That's the vital point," had been the chief's first thought. "They must not be allowed to cook up a joint story."

As the inspector hastened to the telephone box, his face grew convulsed with a sudden fear. "Wanted, instantly, at the Tombs! Heavens! Bennett must not escape God's vengeance!"

Down the long street the inspector's carriage tore along as swiftly as a fire patrol wagon dashing away to the rescue. He could see from the windows the nimble lads crying, "Extra! Extra!" and they had sheaves of leaded sheets under their arms. But not a moment did the great inspector hesitate as he urged his driver on.

When the morning factory whistles sounded at seven o'clock and their echoes woke the haggard-eyed man in the solitary cell at the Tombs, the guardian of the night yawned and let in a frowsy-looking "trusty" with a tray of coarse food. "Stay here for a half an hour, Jim," said the sleepy guard. "I want to get my own breakfast." And he then whispered a few words to the new-comer, who glared at the Honorable Seaton Bennett and nodded, a convict's first greeting—one of the guild. There was the clash of a door far down the corridor, and then, as the guard's steps died away, Seaton Bennett sprang to the "trusty's" side. "There's a thousand dollars in these," he hissed, tearing two diamond set cuff links from his sleeves. "Get me the morning papers."

The man hesitated. "On the dead square, governor?" the sleepy looking brute answered.

"Hasten! I've got more for you! Quick!"

"Oh, Jim will have his breakfast, and a shave, and a drink. You've got lots of time! Money talks, even in the Tombs," was the trusty's reply. "Want a drink?" Bennett nodded. And the leering man, locking the door, lounged away. He returned in a few moments and thrust a damp paper into Bennett's hands. "There's

a hell of a racket about some pretty girl found dead in a box—in a trunk at the Manhattan Storage House. Is that what you're lagged for?"

The man whose name was now heading the great flaring posters of the "Last Grand Rally" hoarsely whispered, "Have you got the drink?"

"No! Wait! I'll get you a flask, but you must drink it quick and give it back. I've got a reputation to support."

Bennett forgot the coarse familiarity of the frowzy loafer, and only saw the grim stone walls swing around him as he eagerly devoured the two black headed columns of the flaring "extra." Something then seemed to snap in his brain as he read the sensational disclosure. There was the whole ghastly story! The trunk marked S. B., and the check strap and that tell-tale brass tag marked 17580! In a moment all the vantage walls he had cunningly builded fell around him with a crash. "That damned scoundrel Doolan betrayed me!" he groaned. "And he would have hounded me to hell later. His death revealed this hidden witness. He stole the trunk and he put— My God!" a hoarse yell was smothered in his throat as he heard the lazy "trusty" shuffling up the corridor. For the thought of that loving woman came to him now, she whose arms had clasped him in love's last embrace as he left her with her eyes shining on him in tenderness. "She must never know! By God! I'll fool them all yet!" and a cunning glance was in his gleaming eyes as he held out his shaking hand for the flask. "Bring me a little sugar!" he softly whined. "There! Go! That's all I've got," and he thrust a roll of bills in the "trusty's" hand. "I'll get his watch yet," chuckled the scoundrel as he sped away.

Seaton Bennett quickly wheeled around and thrust his face to the grated bars. He heard the far away corridor door clang. He then drew back as the contact of the iron bars chilled his burning face. "I must be quick now!" he muttered, speaking in a dazed monotone. "Yes! I will fool them all yet!" And his

trembling fingers tore open an oval locket pendant from the end of his double guard chain. He sprang to the gloomy corner, where the tin cup hung upon a chain. He dropped the locket in the water which he had drawn into the heavy cup. And his hand shook in a last nervous convulsion as he saw the white powder melt out of the golden case. "Ah!" he gasped, as he could hear the lock grating in the corridor door. He raised the cup still hanging on the chain to his fevered lips. There was a rattling sound as the chained cup clashed back against the echoing stone walls. Then a crash as of a heavy body falling! Not a sound followed but the clatter of the trusty's feet as he sprang up the corridor. The frightened spoiler of the criminal tore the door open. "The damned cove has been and done himself up!" cried the frightened brute as he fled away down the corridor to alarm the keepers with frantic yells. And yet, he had all a convict's cunning, for he had thrust the journal and the whisky flask under his own greasy vest.

Grim and stern was the inspector as he stood a half hour later over the fallen body of the man who had "fooled them all at last." The story of the "trusty" was stubbornly blurted out. "He had somethink he just slipped in the water. An' I warn't no death watch."

The inspector's cold gray eyes rested upon the fallen statesman's corpse in an un pitying stare, for he knew now that the windfall of reward money had set Carkins and the smith upon an extended debauch, and that an enterprising "morning journal" had spread all the babblings of the drunkards abroad. "Wheels within wheels," mused the chief. "The news must have reached him. The whole story will never be told now. It was the same poison which struck down that poor girl perhaps. God help his poor wife! I must hide what I can of this terrible crime—for the sake of the innocent, alive and dead."

And soon then a curious crowd gathered to gaze at the senseless thing that had been a man—a man of

bounding pulses, of wild passions, a fool of fortune, to whom the devil in his heart had exultingly cried, "The Cyanide process is a success."

Before the sun threw a sickly gleam of reflected noon-day beams into the dark corridor of the Tombs Seaton Bennett's lifeless form lay, veiled from the sight of men, in charge of the officers of the law. There was a hastily summoned junta of political friends, and then the three most confidential comrades of Bennett's brief public life departed to await the arrival of the "Raven" from quarantine. It had been the chief's first duty to dispatch the detective captain to bring the steward and skipper, Hank Moulton, to Mulberry Street. "You may use all fitting discretion with Mrs. Bennett," said the inspector. "Tell her that the boat is still in charge of the customs officers, and let the sailing master take the yacht to her usual anchorage. The customs inspector will seal the cabins and all the hatches. I have asked this delegation of family and political friends to take Mrs. Bennett to her home. Leave it to them to break the news of this vacancy on the winning ticket. His friends agree that oblivion is best—for all. As for Bennett, no new charge can be made against him legally now. He stands on the 'small book' as 'John Doe, disorderly conduct.' But how on the 'Great Book?' He has left a loving woman's broken heart behind, and the pale wraith of the murdered girl is waiting there to arraign him before the bar of God's judgment. I have sent for Mr. Renwick, and I think Hugh Atwater and he, had better get Bashford away at once to Delaware. There is nothing left but to bury both murderer and victim."

"And—further investigation?" anxiously questioned the captain.

"That depends on this man Devlin. Now, when you bring me Moulton and the steward, the last links of the chain are complete."

Long before the "Raven" had been towed to her anchorage in South Bay the woman who had showered fortune's favors and a passionate love upon the dead

schemer knew that she was left alone in the world.

From the moment of Seaton Bennett's death an impenetrable mystery rested upon all the eagerly sought details of his sudden death. For a new name was being hastily printed upon the election tickets and the Nineteenth District "tossed its ready cap in air" for the next favorite of the great political society. The baffled reporters ran to and fro vainly, but a wall seemed to grow up between them and the double tragedy.

Renfrow sat in the room at Mulberry Street moody and silent, while the inspector plied the frightened funeral director of Long Island City with questions. And yet, shaken in his every nerve, Devlin's quick Irish wit and glib tongue guided him craftily on. The easy formalities of the Long Island City jail had given the undertaker access to his usual creature comforts and all the daily papers. And, a member of a dozen secret societies, Devlin knew from the easy-going police that Seaton Bennett's lips were sealed in death long before he faced the grim inspector. The time was short, but he was now ready.

"I'll make a clean breast of it all. For, why should I not? If Doolan took advantage of me, he's not here to answer now," so Devlin babbled along. "When I was taken down to that lonely house by Red Mike, he told a straight-out story of sudden trouble. A Cuban gentleman coming in on his yacht, and wanting to quietly meet some of his revolutionary friends, planning a new rising, had hired this lonely place. The story of the lady dying alone of heart disease was given to me. It was all apparently fair and decent. Doolan said that the Cuban sailors would never take her body home on the yacht with their superstition, and the conspiring foreigner was afraid of our laws and customs authorities. The poor, darling lady was rightly dead. I made all the usual arrangements for preservation and transportation. The reason given was fair enough, and I had trusted Doolan for twenty years. Yes, I do remember that big trunk, marked S. B. I gave Mr. Doolan both the lady's rings. 'I'll

keep them for him, safe,' said he. 'Yes,' said I. For the one is very valuable. And he gave me the name, S. B.—'Santos Benavides.' I was sent away home, and only as well paid as usual for my time and professional trouble. Doolan quietly sent me away to the train by a boy. 'They're loading on arms and ammunition secretly for Cuba at the old landing,' said he. 'This will go aboard as a case of arms, and so the sailors will never know.' I made sure to question Doolan a week later when he came back. 'The yacht got safely off to Cuba,' said he, 'and I never heard a word of anything wrong.' Yes, those are the very rings. And the picture, too, looks like the poor, darling lady."

A half hour's questioning failed to shake the crafty old fellow's nerve. "The burial regulations and legal formalities? Why, they are violated a hundred times a year. Doolan was a leading man, a big tax-payer, and, beyond a political row now and then, and his whisky trade, he was never in any trouble. Can't ye see, chief, what I'd do for him? Sure, we were boys in the old country together."

"I'll parol you, Devlin, to the custody of the chief at Long Island City," said the inspector. "If I want you, show up at once here. And, make no mistake. Don't try to leave the town. I'll know of your every movement."

The inspector turned to Renwick, when Devlin hastily scuttled away. "I wish to give him a little rope. If he looks up any of the 'trunk gang' I will know it," was the grim prophecy, "but, I am inclined to believe that the marble block over Red Mike's body holds the real secret down. This fellow was only a catspaw for the dead blackmailer."

The frightened yacht steward was soon led in by the detective captain and blurted out his own story while quivering with fear.

"Yes, sir! That's the lady who came on in the night and got off at Sag Harbor. She was heavily veiled when she came off in our boat at Greenport, but I saw her face. I watched them through the cabin skylight

and had just one glimpse of her face, for Mr. Bennett then rang for me, and he met me carefully at the gangway. That's all I know. And he left the yacht that night with her. We saw him next down at Cape May. I stowed the trunk she brought. This one looks like it, and the other is Mr. Bennett's own trunk. These are the very clothes he had in it, and a lot of papers. I had packed it often for him."

The bearded yacht skipper at once told a manly story. "I was engaged to sail the 'Raven' by the year. Mrs. Martyn loaned her yacht out right and left. We've had dozens of very strange parties aboard—political, hunting parties, and, well, social cruises. The yacht was Mr. Bennett's to command after we took to cruising down to Prince's Bay. For God's sake, keep me out of this thing! Mrs. Martyn was a kind employer. It's true that I run the boat in at Greenport and took a lady over to Montauk Point. But I could easily see that Mr. Bennett did not wish me to know her, by his actions. I had my boat to sail, and there was no occasion for me to pry into his secrets. For that matter, the summer history of any of the pleasure yachts flitting along our coast would astonish even you. I am a sailor, chief, and a family man. But there are plenty of skippers who are paid not to see anything. I earn my bread on the salt water, and I have never touched a cent of bribe or blackmail. What shall I do now with the boat? I only know that this poor lady came and went, in silence, under Mr. Bennett's own escort."

"Take your man, captain," said the chief sadly. "Get back on the 'Raven.' I'll leave one man there as a formality. You must now wait Mrs. Bennett's orders. Should you be discharged by her, come in and see me. I want to keep your address and that of your steward. Say nothing of this to Mrs. Bennett. She has enough to bear. Poor woman. Her life will be dreary enough as it is."

"God help her! It's a sad home-coming!" said Moulton, brushing his eyes with the back of a bronzed hand. "She would have died herself, I'll go bail, rather!

than be the bait to this cruel deed. She is a decent woman!"

"Ah, captain, there's the rub. In thirty years of police life, I've tried to find out why the innocent often suffer in the place of the guilty," mournfully said the chief, "and I have failed to find the answer, either in the codes or in the counsels of the wise. There is something strange in the uselessness of crime; something awful in the terrible rushing tide of temptation; something mockingly cruel in the final fruitlessness of evil deeds. But, for cold heartlessness, for crafty brutality, for a devilish unpitying wickedness, give me always the educated man or woman who goes wrong. There's no limit to their fiendishness."

The mansion on Murray Hill was soon tenantless and none of the thousand friends of Seaton Bennett knew to what corner of the earth the woman whose love had exalted the dead man, fled away to bear alone her burden of sorrow and shame. The long days dragged on and winter snows covered the slayer and his victim with their ermine mantle.

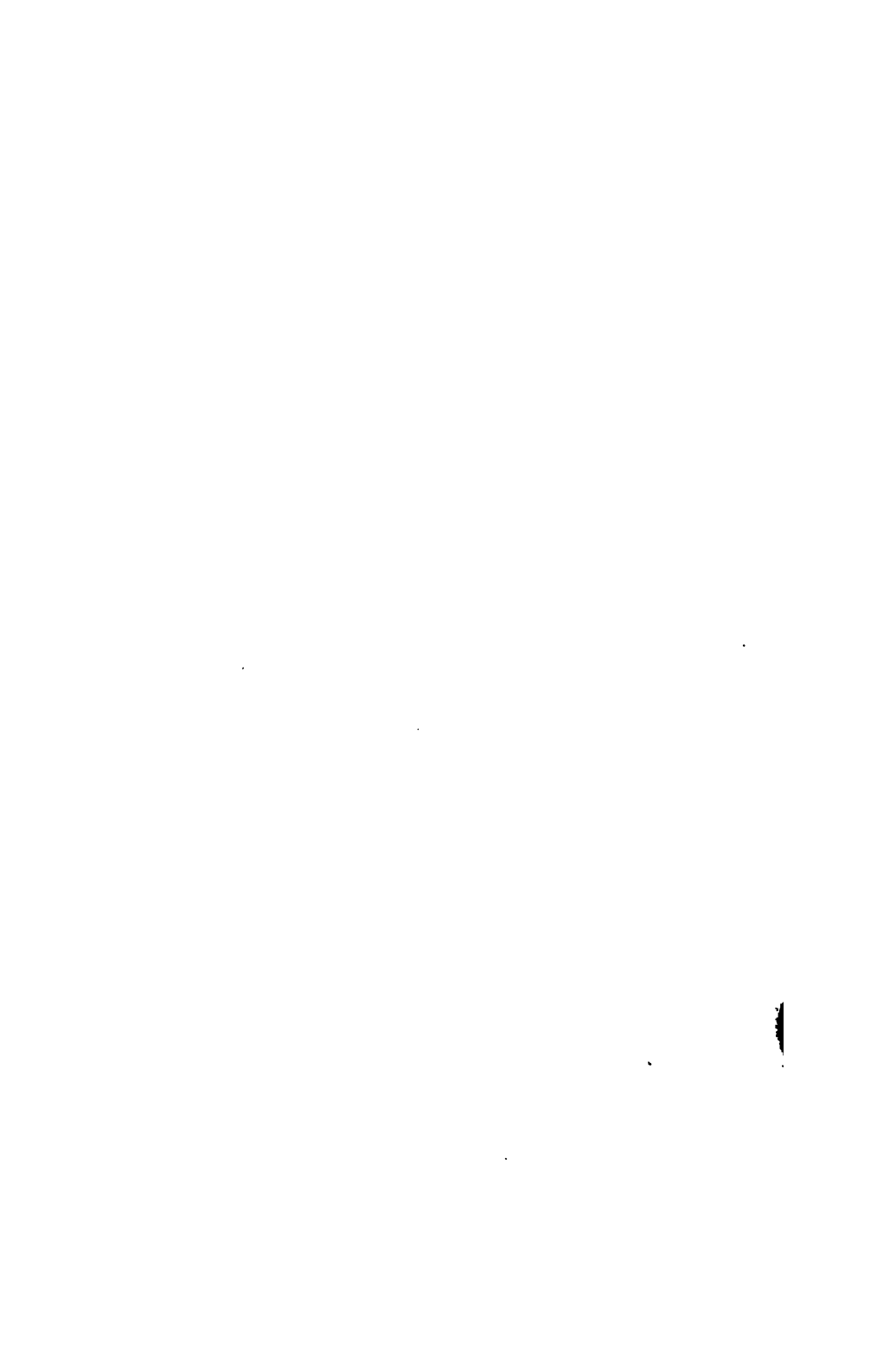
There was nothing of all the high-souled aspirations of the modern Portia left now to linger in the hearts of the living, for the flickering fever of her life had burned itself out unsatisfied.

Only a grave under the spreading elms of the lonely park on the Delaware, which became the Mecca of the loving hearts who fondly thought of her, at her best, with all the bright promise of youth shining upon her stainless brow.

There was one faithful guardian of the sacred spot, in the broken old man, once the great counselor, who now saw the past "as through a glass darkly." For Hiram Bashford would ever question his attendant, "Where is Madeleine?" And they would vainly lead him to her tomb and show him the words graven there, "Madeleine Ware— loving and trusting—she went on her way—alone!"

THE END.





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